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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Water crisis to hit economy, worsen inflation in India

Moody says water shortage will disrupt farm, industry sectors

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Moody's Ratings on Tuesday said India's growing water shortage can disrupt farm and industry sectors resulting in inflation in food prices. It added that rising food inflation and decline in income may spark social unrest.

It said that it can be detrimental to credit health of sectors that heavily consume water, such as coal power generators and steel-makers.

India's fast economic growth, accompanied by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, will reduce water availability in the world's most populous country, it said.

India is facing a growing water shortage as water consumption increases amid rapid economic growth and increasingly frequent natural disasters due to climate change, Moody's said in a report on environmental risk facing India.

The report comes amid a growing water crisis faced by residents in some parts of the national capital, which has led to protests and political conflict.

Quoting Ministry of Water Resources data, Moody's said India's average annual water availability per capita is likely to drop to 1,367 cubic meters by 2031 from an already-low 1,486 cubic meters in 2021 A level below 1,700 cubic meters indicates water stress, with 1,000 cubic meters being the threshold for water scarcity, according to the ministry.

Moody's said a heatwave in June 2024 strained water supply. Floods disrupt water infrastructure, which is insufficient to retain water from sudden large downpours.

India is facing a water shortage as the consumption increases amid rapid economic growth **PHOTO: PTI**

Floods in northern India and Cyclone Biparjoy in Gujarat in 2023 caused economic losses of USD 1.2-1.8 billion and damage to infrastructure, it said.

Monsoon rainfall is also lessening. Indian Ocean warmed at a rate of 1.2 degrees Celsius per century during 1950-2020, and this will intensify to 1.7-3.8 degrees Celsius during 2020-2100, it said .

The amount of rainfall has decreased, while droughts have become more severe and frequent. In 2023, monsoon rainfall in India was 6 per cent less than the average for 1971-2020, and the country had an unprecedented rain shortfall in August that year. More than 70 per cent of rainfall in India is concentrated in June-September each year, according to the Moody's report.

In the past, disruptions to agricultural production and a rise in inflationary pressure have led to increases in food subsidies that have contributed to India's fiscal deficits. Food subsidies were budgeted at 4.3 per cent of central government expenditure for the current fiscal year (2024-25), one of the largest items in the budget, the report said.

Coal power generators and steel-makers heavily depend on water for production and growing water shortages can disrupt their operations and hamper their revenue generation, eroding their credit strength, it said.

Moody's said the Indian government is investing in water infrastructure and making a push for the development of renewable energy. At the same time, heavy industrial consumers of water are looking to improve the efficiency of their water use. —*PTI*

K'taka to get USD 6.2B investments: Minister Priyank

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge on Tuesday said USD 6.2 billion investment is expected from its road-shows in Massachusetts, California, London, Paris, Geneva and Munich. The Minister, who holds the Electronics, Information Technology and Bio-Technology portfolio, said he met several business leaders in these cities and received encouraging response from the investors due to the talent pool available in Karnataka. "An investment of USD 6.2 billion is expected. Our government is committed to bring investment in Karnataka from abroad," Kharge said at a press conference. He also said the proposed GCCs will create 35,000 to 40,000 jobs in the State. —*PTI*

2 killed as high tension wire falls on shed in Bagalkot

BAGALKOT, 25 JUNE

Two people were killed and four others were injured after a high tension electric wire fell on a tin shed house, in Bagalkot, on Tuesday. The deceased are Santosh Sunagar, and his mother-in-law Shobha Hullennavara. Srikanth, Mahesh, Kasturi, and Sangeeta Kamashetti were among the four people injured and admitted to the local government hospital. The incident occurred during the Durga Devi fair in Dasarmaddi village as everyone gathered for the celebrations. Santosh and Sangeeta were said to be married on 28 June but this incident has devastated their families. —*Salar News*

Kenyans protest against tax hike, set Parl on fire

NAIROBI, 25 JUNE

Thousands of Kenyan anti-tax protesters have entered parliament, and part of the building is on fire. Legislators are evacuated the building soon after the incident. Police earlier Tuesday fired live ammunition at the protesters in the capital, Nairobi, as thousands continued to rally demanding the legislators to vote against new taxes proposed in a controversial finance bill. Two people died in protests last week but there were no immediate reports of any fresh casualties Tuesday. The third round of protests took place as lawmakers vote on the finance bill that would introduce new taxes, including an eco-levy that would raise the price of goods like sanitary towels and diapers. —*Salar News*

It's Birla vs Suresh for LS Speaker post

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Lok Sabha will witness a rare election for the Speaker's post – the first since 1976 – as Congress member Kodikunnil Suresh has been made the opposition candidate against NDA nominee Om Birla.

BJP's Birla will fight it out with Suresh of the Congress for the Lok Sabha Speaker's post after efforts to reach a consensus between the government and the opposition failed on Tuesday.

The voting will take place on Wednesday. Both Birla and Suresh filed their nominations as NDA and INDIA bloc candidates, respectively.

Birla served as Speaker in the previous Lok Sabha as well and if he wins he would be the first person to get the post for the second term in 25 years. Before filing his nomination, Birla also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He has returned to the Lok Sabha for the third time from Kota in Rajasthan.

BJP's Om Birla & Cong's K Suresh are vying for LS Speaker's post **PHOTO: PTI**

Suresh, an eight-time MP from Kerala, said it is not about winning or losing, but about a convention that Speaker will be of ruling party and deputy speaker will be of Opposition.

"Last two Lok Sabhas, they denied us deputy speaker's post because they said you are not recognised as the opposition. Now we are recognised as the Opposition, deputy speaker post is our right. But they are not ready to give us." he told reporters. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Rahul is Leader of Opposition in LS

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will occupy the post of Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a letter about the decision has been sent to Pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab.

The decision on Rahul Gandhi's appointment as the Leader of Opposition was made after a meeting of the floor leaders of the INDIA bloc at Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's residence.

PHOTO: PTI

"Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson (Sonia Gandhi) wrote to Pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab, informing him of the decision to appoint Rahul Gandhi as the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha," party leader KC Venugopal told reporters.

Rahul has been an MP for five terms and currently represents the Rae Bareli constituency in the Lok Sabha. He took oath as an MP on Tuesday while holding a copy of the Constitution. Congress, being the single largest opposition party, gets the post of opposition leader after a gap of 10 years. —*PTI*

4th FIR against Prajwal, ex-BJP MLA also booked

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

Another First Information Report (FIR) has been registered against former MP Prajwal Revanna on charges of sexual harassment, stalking and criminal intimidation, police sources said on Tuesday.

Along with him, three others, including former BJP MLA from Hassan Preetham Gowda has also been named in the FIR for allegedly sharing images captured by Prajwal during sexual harassment of the victim on a video call, they said. With the fresh FIR, this is the fourth case registered against Prajwal.

Prajwal has been booked in three cases of sexual assault. There are also charges of rape against him.

The cases of sexual abuse came to light after pen-drives containing explicit videos allegedly involving Prajwal were reportedly circulated in Hassan ahead of the Lok Sabha polls there on 26 April.

Prajwal Revanna **PHOTO: PTI**

Second case of sodomy against Suraj. A second case of sodomy was registered against JD(S) MLC Suraj Revanna on Tuesday at Holenarasipura police station in Hassan. The case was registered based on a complaint by a close aide of Suraj.

Suraj's aide had earlier filed a complaint on behalf of the MLC against a JD(S) worker apparently to protect him.

The first case of sodomy was registered against Suraj on Saturday. . —*PTI*

CWMA URGES TN, K'TAKA TO CONSERVE WATER

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

The Central Water Management Authority (CWMA) held its 31st meeting on 25 June to discuss water sharing concerns between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu amidst water shortage in the State.

The meeting highlighted shortage in water inflows in Karnataka's reservoirs and raised questions about Tamil Nadu's water usage. While the CWMA did not make any immediate decisions on water releases, it directed both states to prioritise conserving water in their reservoirs. Karnataka pointed out a decline in water inflow into its four main reservoirs. From 1 June to 24 June, these reservoirs received only 7,300 million cubic feet (TMC) of water compared to the 30-year average (1989-2019) of 24.4 TMC. This represents a deficit of over 70 per cent. Additionally, Tamil Nadu has released 3.97 TMC of water from reservoirs, raising concerns about resource management. Tamil Nadu, which depends on Cauvery River, said Karnataka must release water as per the schedule set by Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal. —*Salar News*

POST FUEL PRICE HIKE

Nandini hikes milk price up by ₹2

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

The Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) on Tuesday announced a hike in milk prices with effect from 26 June, but it also said it would be enhancing the quantity of milk in its half and one litre packets by 50ml.

This comes days after the Karnataka government hiked sales tax on fuel, following which petrol prices have gone up by Rs 3 per litre and diesel by Rs 3.5 per litre in the state.

"As it is the current harvest season, the storage of milk in all district milk unions is increasing every day and the current storage is close to one crore litres. In this background, the price of each packet is being increased by Rs 2 with an additional 50ml of milk being given to the consumers only for each half liter (500ml) and one liter (1000ml) packets," KMF said in a statement.

Currently, the 500ml toned milk packet of Nandini costs Rs 22. With this hike, the 550ml packet will now cost Rs 24. Similarly, the 1000ml (1 litre) packet was priced at Rs 42 and will now be sold as 1,050ml at Rs 44. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday clarified that Rs 2 hike in price of Nandini milk from 26 June is proportional to the increase in volume per packet.His clarification came after opposition attacked the Congress government over increase in milk prices. In a statement, Siddaramaiah said, "There will be no increase in the price of Nandini milk. Instead the price will be proportionally increased for the increased volume."

PHOTO: PTI

He said from now on, 500ml milk packets will be replaced by 550ml packets, and one litre packets will be replaced by 1,050ml packets. This decision by KMF aims to ensure that farmers' additional milk production is not rejected at collection centres. The Opposition took a dig at the government as the hike in milk prices came days after the government hiked fuel prices in the state. Hitting out at the Chief Minister, Leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka alleged the Congress government has increased the milk prices to "celebrate the anniversary of the Emergency." —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

HC deals blow to Kejri, stays bail granted to him

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

- Kejriwal approached the Supreme Court against the interim stay on his bail. On Monday, the Supreme Court fixed 26 June for hearing his plea against the stay, saying it would like to wait for the pronouncement of the high court order.

In a blow to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi High Court stayed the trial court order granting him bail in the money laundering case arising from the alleged excise scam, on Tuesday.

It held that the lower court did not "appropriately appreciate" the material placed before it by Enforcement Directorate (ED).

A vacation bench of Justice Sudhir Kumar Jain said ED's contentions assailing the bail order required serious consideration.

The issue regarding Kejriwal's vicarious liability as the head of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAM) also did not find any place in the bail order, the court added.

The court also stated that it cannot be said that Kejriwal's arrest and remand was not in accordance with law and that his personal liberty was curtailed without following the procedure established by law.

It also said the interim bail granted to the chief minister by the Supreme Court was not on merit but in the background of the Lok Sabha general elections and therefore, his argument that he did not misuse the same is not of much help.

Kejriwal approached the Supreme Court against the interim stay on his bail. On Monday, the Supreme Court fixed 26 June for hearing his plea against the stay, saying it would like to wait for the pronouncement of the high court order. —*PTI*

PLEA DEAL WITH US

WikiLeaks head Assange free after 14 yrs

LONDON, 25 JUNE

Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, who has been fighting against his extradition to the US on espionage charges for over a decade, has been freed from prison and flown out of the UK under a plea deal with the American authorities.

The 52-year-old Australian national was lodged at Belmarsh high-security prison in London since 2019 when he was taken into custody from the Ecuadorian Embassy, where he had sought asylum.

Assange will return to Australia, UK media reports said, citing a letter from the US Justice Department.

He was charged with conspiracy to obtain and disclose national defence information, in what officials call the largest disclosure of secret government records. In return for pleading guilty to one count of conspiracy, he will be sentenced to time served, 62 months – time already spent in a British prison, according to court documents.

Wikileaks Founder Jullian Assange, who is an Australian national, was lodged at Belmarsh high-security prison in London since 2019 **PHOTO: WIKILEAKS**

After a judge accepts this plea, Assange will be free to return to Australia. In a post on X, WikiLeaks said, "After more than five years in a 2x3 metre cell, isolated 23 hours a day, he will soon reunite with his wife, Stella Assange, and their children, who have only known their father from behind bars."

Assange's plea and sentencing are scheduled for Tuesday evening UK time in Saipan, one of the Northern Mariana Islands. The hearing is taking place in the US Commonwealth territory because of Assange's opposition to travelling to one of the 50 US states and the court's proximity to Australia.

Assange's brother, Gabriel Shipton, told 'Sky News' that the Wikileaks founder is "overwhelmed to be out of prison". "He's looking forward to spending time with his family and being free, being able to have the sun shining on his face, see the birds, go for a swim in the ocean back in Australia." The Australian government said it continues to provide consular assistance to Assange. Two High Court judges ruled last month that Assange would be allowed to appeal against his extradition order. They agreed on giving assurances from the US that Assange would be protected by First Amendment of the Consti tution, which protects freedom of speech, and death penalty would not be imposed. —*PTI*

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87th All-India Kannada literary meet on 20-22 Dec

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday informed that 87th 'Akhila Bharata Kannada Sahitya Sammelana' (all-India Kannada literary meet) will be held in Mandya from December 20 to 22. He was talking to reporters after holding a meeting with the Kannada Sahitya Parishat, Mandya district administration, District in-charge Minister NCheluvarayaswamy and MLAs from the district. "Earlier we had met in February to discuss the dates, but as the code of conduct for the Lok Sabha polls was expected soon, it was postponed. Now it is decided to hold the Sahitya Sammelana in the month of December on 20, 21 and 22 for three days. A large number of Kannadigas from the state, outside the state and abroad are expected to participate," Siddaramaiah said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SALAR

Tourists thrashed for choosing bikes over jeeps in Hassan

HASSAN, 25 JUNE

The local drivers allegedly assaulted tourists at Patla Betta, a popular tourist spot in the Sakaleshpur taluk of Hassan district. The incident took place on Monday after a group of tourists chose motorcycles over jeeps resulting in violent assault by local drivers. One of the victims Bhuvit Pujari, a tourist from Dakshina Kannada, lodged a complaint. Following this, an FIR was registered at the Yasalur police station against four individuals- Gagan, Kiran, Nishant, and Madan. This incident has sparked outrage among tourists, who are accusing the authorities of the inadequate management of tourist activities, particularly those under the jurisdiction of the Forest Department. The tourists call for better measures to ensure the safety and well-being of visitors to the area. *—Salar News*

Bandh against Tumakuru canal brings life to a halt

TUMAKURU, 25 JUNE

Tumakuru bandh called on Tuesday opposing implementation of the Express Canal on the Hemavathi River received an immense support resulting in complete shut off of commercial activities in the City. Traffic was minimal in the morning, and as the day progressed, almost all businesses closed in solidarity with the protest. Only banks and hospitals remained open to serve the public. The bandh, organised by the Anti-Hemavathi Link Canal Struggle Committee, saw participation from farmers' organisations. Police beefed up security to avoid any untoward incidents. Around 10 am, protesters gathered near the Town Hall and blocked the road for over an hour. The project, estimated to be around Rs 1,000 crore, was commissioned during Congress-JD(S) in 2018, and the work began when Congress formed government in 2023. *—Salar News*

CM directs officials to take dengue detection seriously

A total of 5,374 cases and five deaths have been reported

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

With dengue cases being reported in the state, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday directed officials to take seriously the detection and treatment of the viral infection.

Siddaramaiah, who had convened a meeting with Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao and senior officers, also instructed them to ensure availability of treatment, medicine and platelets.

According to the chief minister's office, a total of 5,374 cases and five deaths have been reported in the state till yesterday.

The Central government guidelines state that the dengue case fatality rate should not exceed 0.5 per cent. The case fatality rate in the state is 0.09 per cent, which is far less than the prescribed limit, it said.

The Central government guidelines state that the dengue case fatality rate should not exceed 0.5 per cent *PHOTO: SALAR*

More cases have been reported from Bengaluru, Chikkamagaluru, Mysuru, Haveri, Shivamogga, Chitradurga, Dakshina Kannada districts. As many as 1,230 cases have been reported in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) limits. Siddaramaiah said the government has taken this seriously and has directed the officers to take all measures to control the disease.

He directed officers to ensure availability of all necessary treatment facilities and medicines in all government hospitals. He also told them to conduct door-to-door surveys and create awareness among the public, and also to rope in ASHA workers, nursing students, NSS students and other volunteers for this purpose.

At the meeting it was decided that a special mission will be held to take up intense source reduction activity every Friday. Siddaramaiah instructed the BBMP, Urban Development Department and Health Department officers to jointly review the dengue situation in the state, and also instructed Urban local bodies to take necessary steps for sanitation and avoid accumulation of water.

He appealed to the public to cooperate with the authorities by destroying the 'Aedes aegypti' larvae that can spread dengue at the source. *—PTI*

Congress will respond to ministers pushing for more DyCM: DKS

MANGALURU, 25 JUNE

Seemingly expressing his displeasure against ministers demanding three more deputy chief minister posts, State Congress President DK Shivakumar on Tuesday said the party would respond to them appropriately.

Currently, Shivakumar from the Vokkaliga community is the only Deputy Chief Minister in the Siddaramaiah-led cabinet.

Some of the ministers in the Cabinet have been pitching for Deputy Chief Minister posts to be given to leaders from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities.

Asked whether there is a plan in the party to have more deputy chief ministers, he said, "You please meet Mallikarjun Kharge (AICC president) and our in-charge general secretary or ask the Chief Minister."

DK Shivakumar *PHOTO: PTI*

- Some of the ministers in the Cabinet have been pitching for Deputy Chief Minister posts to be given to leaders from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities

A section within the Congress is said to be of the opinion that the statement by ministers seeking three more Deputy Chief Minister posts was part of a plan by Siddaramaiah's camp to keep Shivakumar in check, amid talks that he might seek the chief minister post after two-and-a-half years of this government's tenure, and to counter his influence both in the government and the party.

The ministers -- Co-Operation Minister KN Rajanna, Housing Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan, Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi and few others -- who have pitched for three more DCMs are considered close to Siddaramaiah. *—PTI*

DKS questions HDK'S contribution to Channapatna

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, during a press interaction at Mangalore International Airport en route to the Kukke Subramanya temple, criticised Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy for questioning his contributions to Channapatna. He asserted that his involvement with the town precedes Kumaraswamy's by a significant margin.

"I have seen Channapatna much before Kumaraswamy entered politics. I even ran against his father, HD Deve Gowda, in the 1985 elections, while Kumaraswamy entered the political arena a decade later," Shivakumar said. *—Salar News*

RESTAURANTS NOT HIT

Nandini milk price hike gets mixed reaction in B'luru

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

After State government increased the petrol and diesel tariff now the Karnataka Milk Federation has decided to increase prices by Rs 2 per litre by across Bengaluru. The hike has stirred significant responses across Bengaluru, affecting home-makers and those living below the poverty line

the most.

The hike has broader implications for those living below the poverty line. Speaking to Salar News Anitha Santosh Kumar, a resident of Padmanabhnagar, said, "I work as a maid in households. The price increase is a burden. The additional 50 ml doesn't make much of a difference when we are struggling with the rising costs of other essentials as well."

Surekha Prasad P, a housewife from Banashankari, said, "Given the current inflation, a Rs 2 increase is manageable, and the extra milk will help stretch our budget a bit further."

A home-maker Meera Rao residing near Banaswadi told Salar News, "The additional 50 ml is a small but welcome benefit, especially in large families. It's reassuring that despite the price hike, we get more milk as well in return."

- Surekha Prasad P, a housewife from Banashankari, said, "Given the current inflation, a Rs 2 increase is manageable, and the extra milk will help stretch our budget a bit further."

When asked about the price hike and its impacts on food items that use milk, President of Bruhat Bangalore Hotels Association PC Rao has assured that despite the increase in price of milk, there will be no increase in the prices of food items. "As of now there will not be any increase in the prices of tea or coffee or any of the food items that use milk products, in any of the hotels or restaurants. This is because the price increase was very minimal and we are getting extra milk in return as well. This will not affect us to a large extent," he said. *—Salar News*

Darshan's fan arrested for threatening film producer

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

The City police on Tuesday arrested a fan of actor Darshan for threatening film producer Umapathy Gowda and Kannada actor Pratham over their comments on the Renukaswamy murder case.

The court had directed the Basaveshwara Nagar police to register an FIR against the accused, Chethan, from Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu. The police are also searching for another accused Nagesh, who is a fan of Darshan. Gowda and Pratham had written social media post against the actor and showed their support for Renukaswamy, 33, who was allegedly kidnapped, tortured and killed by Darshan and his partner Pavithra Gowda and 15 others.

Chethan *PHOTO: SALAR*

Chethan has made a public apology on social media for his actions. *—Salar News*

RENUKASWAMY'S PARENTS MEET CM

The parents of Renukaswamy, who was allegedly killed by actor Darshan and his aides, broke down while meeting Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday. While they reportedly expressed satisfaction with the ongoing probe into their son's death, they also sought a government job for Renukaswamy's wife, who is pregnant. A total of 17 people including Darshan and his friend Pavithra Gowda, are accused in the murder case *PHOTO: SALAR NEWS*

Udayanidhi Stalin *PHOTO: PTI*

Udayanidhi gets bail over Sanatan Dharma remarks

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

Actor turned politician and Tamil Nadu Minister Udayanidhi Stalin was granted bail on Tuesday by a city court for his 'eradicate Sanatan Dharma' remark. The DMK leader appeared before the 42nd Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate following a notice to him based on a petition by social activist Paramesh for his remark.

Udayanidhi Stalin, who holds sports and youth affairs portfolio, got the bail with a surety of Rs 1 lakh.

The case has been posted to 8 August. Udhayanidhi is the son of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and ruling DMK Chief MK Stalin.

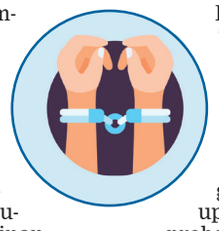
Speaking at a conference in Chennai in September 2023, Udhayanidhi had said Sanatana Dharma was against social justice and equality and that it should be 'eradicated' like malaria and dengue. *—PTI*

1 more held in Valmiki Corporation scam

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

Special Investigation Team (SIT) officials arrested another accused in the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Corporation scam, in Channagiri, Davangere, on Tuesday. Saitej is the associate of Satyanarayana, chairman of First Finance Credit Co-Operative Society Limited in Hyderabad.

The corruption case of Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation came to light after an official of the Corporation died by suicide. Chandrashekar 45, a resident of the Kenchappa colony of Vinobanagar was an officer of Maharishi Valmiki Development Corporation. He committed suicide and allegedly wrote a six-page suicide note with the names of three officials including Saitej, involved in the multi-crore corruption. Critical documents related to the financial transfers were discovered following the arrest.



CM Siddaramaiah said that no one will be protected in the Maharishi Valmiki Corporation employee's death case adding that legal action will be taken against all those who are found guilty.

Karnataka Scheduled Tribes Welfare Minister B Nagendra has voluntarily decided to resign as an investigation is going on over the scam allegations. In a recent update, ED has begun a probe into the alleged illegal diversion and laundering of money.

This is the third agency probing the scam. *—Salar News with agencies*

Zameer Ahmed Khan's remark sparks outrage again

BIDAR, 25 JUNE

Housing and Minority Welfare and Wakf Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan again sparked a controversy by saying that Eshwar Khandre's son, Sagar Khandre, won Lok Sabha Elections 2024 primarily due to Muslim votes. He was attending a meeting at the Waqf Adalat in Bidar on Monday.

Speaking in Hindi, Zameer said, "Sirf aur sirf Muslim vote se Sagar Khandre jeete so hai. Hamara kaam jhuk marke karna padta hai" (Sagar Khandre won only with Muslim votes. He should do our work with his head bowed). Khan said that Eswar should prioritise the needs of the Muslims.

The controversial remarks also triggered a strong reaction from Opposition BJP leaders. They have condemned Khan's statement, accusing him of divisive politics and undermining the democratic process. BJP leaders R Ashok, Basanagowda Patil, CT Ravi, and others have expressed their outrage. *—Salar News*

WORLD DRUG DAY

Crackdown on drug peddlers sends 34 foreigners to jail

VAISHNAVI GOPALRAJ
BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

The City police have arrested 34 foreign drug peddlers in the first five months of 2024, a significant decrease from the 37 and 59 arrested in the same period in 2023 and 2022, respectively. This decline is attributed to the arrest of Rengara Paul, the kingpin of international drug peddlers in the City.

Most of the arrested peddlers entered the City on student or business visas and allegedly overstayed their visas to engage in drug trafficking. City Crime Records Bureau (CCRB) data shows 209 cases registered and 293 drug peddlers arrested in the first five months of 2024, compared to 386 cases and 550 arrests in 2023.

However, authorities are concerned about a rise in domestic production of synthetic drugs using small-scale setups. Methamphetamine (meth), a popular drug, is particularly troublesome because its ingredients can be extracted from over-the-counter cold medicines, making it difficult to track bulk purchases.

A police officer told Salar News there was an increase in drug sales among teenagers, with substances like marijuana, MDMA, hashish oil, and e-cigarettes becoming more accessible. CCB narcotics officials observed a rise in house parties specifically organised for drug consumption

NIMHANS, a mental health institute, receives around ten teenagers for drug abuse treatment every month.

"I see at least five to six parents bringing in their children for drug addiction, but most cases involve teenagers caught using drugs rather than being addicted," said Santhosh Mallikarjun, Administrator at NIMHANS' Drug De-addiction centre cell.

"Ganja is a common problem. We also hear about teenagers who are influenced by peers or addicted to sniffing substances like glue, nail polish, and petrol, which contain benzene," he said. *—Salar News*

LEGAL CHASE TO BEAT DRUGS

No. of cases filed
- 2024: 209
- 2023: 677
- 2022: 579
- 2021: 696

Drop in No. of arrests made
- 2024: 193
- 2023: 984
- 2022: 977
- 2021: 1,184

Drugs seized and its worth (in kg)
- 2024: 2.2; Rs 38.41 crore
- 2023: 5.3; Rs 103 crore
- 2022: 4.2; Rs 60 crore
- 2021: 3.7; Rs 93 crore

MOST POPULAR DRUGS SEIZED IN 2024

Type	Quantity in kg	Worth in Rs crore
MDMA	20.7	20.86
Cocaine	1.9	6.67
Ganja	1103.7	5.51
Hashish Oil	7.5	1.17

POLICE TO DISPOSE OF SEIZED DRUGS WORTH RS 38.81 CR

BENGALURU, 25 JUNE

City Police will dispose of psychotropic and narcotic substances worth over Rs 38.81 crore on Wednesday, to mark International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

In the last five months alone, the police have seized MDMA crystals, cocaine, ganja and hashish oil from the City limits. The value of the destroyed drugs has risen from Rs 25.6 crore in 2023 to Rs 38.81 crore this year. This increase is allegedly due to a rise in sale of over-the-counter drugs among teenagers and adults. *—Salar News*

Modi likely to visit Russia: Officials

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Indian and Russian officials are looking at the possibility of a short visit to Russia by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in early July, diplomatic sources said on Tuesday. If the visit takes place, then it will be the first trip of the Indian Prime Minister to Russia in nearly five years. There is no confirmation by the Indian side on the possible visit by Modi. The visit is being planned for the annual India-Russia summit. Russian media, quoting a Kremlin official, reported that active preparations are underway for Modi's visit to Russia. If Modi travels to Russia, then he and President Vladimir Putin are set to hold the India-Russia annual summit after a gap of three years. The summit is the highest institutional dialogue mechanism between the two countries.—*PTI*

SC rejects bail plea of SP's Ramakant in liquor case

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to entertain the bail plea of Samajwadi Party (SP) MLA Ramakant Yadav in a spurious liquor case in which nine people died in Azamgarh in 2022. A vacation bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Rajesh Bindal refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court order denying him bail. Yadav had moved the top court against the 14 May order of the High Court which rejected his bail plea with a direction to the trial court to complete the examination of the remaining witnesses within four months. An FIR was registered in February 2022 at Ahraula police station. —*PTI*

Jagan wants to be recognised as Oppn leader

AMARAVATI, 25 JUNE

YSRCP chief and former Andhra Pradesh chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday requested Assembly Speaker C Ayyannapatrudu to recognise him as the leader of Opposition and his party as the principal opposition party. Reddy made this plea in a letter to the speaker. "Law mandates that whichever party has the highest number of seats in the Opposition should be recognised as the principal opposition," Reddy said in the letter shared by YSRCP to PTI. He claimed that no law states that 10 per cent seats are required to confer the principal opposition party status, and added that such a practice has not been followed in Parliament or the state's assembly. According to Reddy, making him take oath as a member of the assembly after the swearing-in of ministers recently was against tradition. YSRCP suffered a humiliating electoral debacle in the recent simultaneous polls, winning a paltry 11 assembly and four Lok Sabha seats.—*PTI*

Fighting a lonely battle for Maratha quota: Jarange

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 25 JUNE

T The Maratha quota agitation leader Manoj Jarange on Tuesday said while the OBC leaders were united over the issue of reservation despite belonging to different parties, those from his own community were not with him and he was fighting a lonely battle for quota. He was talking to reporters on Tuesday before being discharged from a private hospital where he was admitted a few days ago. Jarange, who launched his latest round of protest on 8 June and suspended it six days later, has been demanding implementation of the draft notification that recognises Kunbis as 'sage soyare' (blood relatives) of Maratha community members. Kunbi, an agrarian group, falls under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category, and Jarange has been demanding that Kunbi certificates be issued to all Marathas, thus making them eligible for quota benefits. —*PTI*

'JAI HIND, JAI SAMVIDHAN'

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi shows a copy of Constitution of India as he takes oath as a member of the House during the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha, in New Delhi, on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

'JAI TELANGANA, JAI PALESTINE'

AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi Tuesday hailed a conflict-hit West Asian country after taking oath as a member of the 18th Lok Sabha, triggering an uproar from the treasury benches *PHOTO: PTI*

Oppn's K Suresh has seen it all

He is Oppn's pick for Speaker

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Kodikunnil Suresh, the Opposition's pick for the Lok Sabha speaker who will go up against BJP's Om Birla, is a Congress veteran, an eight-term MP and one whose election in 2009 was declared invalid by the Kerala High Court before being restored by the Supreme Court.

Birla is seeking his second term as the speaker of the Lower House of Parliament.

Suresh, 66, won from the Mavelikkara (SC) constituency in Kerala with a margin of just 10,000 votes.

His first name is derived from Kodikunnil, in Thiruvananthapuram, where he was born on 4 June, 1962.

In 2009, he won again but his victory was challenged by his nearest rival who alleged that Suresh, then a five-time MP, produced a fake caste certificate and that he was a

K Suresh *PHOTO: PTI*

Christian.

Kerala High Court had declared his election invalid but the decision was later overturned by the Supreme Court.

Allowing the election petition of defeated candidate AS Anil Kumar of the CPI and two others, the high court had ruled that Suresh was not a member of 'Cheramar' community and thereby, not a Scheduled Caste.

The court also held that he was "disqualified" to contest from the Mavelikara constituency as it is reserved for Schedule Castes. —*PTI*

Cong lays terms for Speaker post

BJP yet to get back on proposal

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said the Opposition will support the government on the Lok Sabha Speaker's choice if the convention is followed and the deputy speaker's post is given to the opposition bloc.

He also said that Defence Minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh was yet to get back to them on the opposition's demand for the deputy speaker's post.

Gandhi said Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants constructive cooperation but has not returned party president Mallikarjun Kharge's call on the demand, as promised, which amounts to an insult.

"Union minister Rajnath Singh had called Mallikarjun Kharge ji and has said that he will return his call, but it has not been done. While Modi ji wants constructive cooperation they are insulting our

Rahul Gandhi *PHOTO: PTI*

leader by not returning the call," he told.

"The intention of Modi is not clear as the post of deputy speaker should be with the opposition. But Narendra Modi ji says something and does something else," he alleged.

Separately, Kota MP Om Birla met Prime Minister Modi amid indications that he could be fielded for the post of Lok Sabha Speaker, a position he held in the previous House. —*PTI*

'BIHAR ZINDABAD'

Independent MP Rajesh Ranjan, popularly known as Pappu Yadav, wore a T-shirt emblazoned with "#reneet" demanding NEET-UG re-examination *PHOTO: PTI*

'JAI HINDU RASHTRA'

Chaos ensued in the Lok Sabha after BJP MP from Bareilly Chhatra Pal Singh Gangwar ended his oath with 'Jai Hindu Rashtra. It was a tit-for-tat reply to Owaisi' statement *PHOTO: PTI*

Cong has no right to profess love for Constitution: PM

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

On the 49th anniversary of Emergency, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that its dark days are a reminder of how Congress subverted basic freedoms and trampled over the Constitution which every Indian respects greatly.

Hitting out at the main Opposition party, he said in posts on X that those who

Narendra modi *PHOTO: PTI*

imposed the Emergency have no right to profess their love for our Constitution.

Modi said, "These are the same people who have imposed Article 356 on innumerable occasions, got a Bill to destroy press freedom, destroyed federalism and violated every aspect of the Constitution." Just to cling on to power, the then Congress Government disregarded every democratic principle and turned the nation into a jail, Modi said, adding that any person who disagreed with the party was tortured and harassed. On June 25, 1975, the then prime minister Indira Gandhi, imposed Emergency in the country, suspending civil liberties, jailing opposition leaders.

The first day of the 18th Lok Sabha witnessed a war of words between Modi and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge over the imposition of Emergency. —*PTI*

Bihar cancels ₹823cr deals of 'Mahagathbandhan' regime

PATNA, 25 JUNE

NDA government in Bihar has cancelled 350 contracts worth Rs 826 crore, which were awarded during the previous 'Mahagathbandhan' dispensation in the state for supplying drinking water in rural areas, a minister said on Tuesday.

The decision to cancel the contracts was taken after an inquiry by the Public Health Engineering Department revealed that there were "irregularities in the process of selecting contractors", he said.

The department has handed over the preliminary inquiry report to the competent authority in the state government for a thorough probe, he said.

Altogether 1,160 contracts worth Rs 4,600 crore of the PHE department were awarded by the previous government in 17 months, Singh said.

"We have so far cancelled 350 contracts, the remaining are being examined," he said.

The minister, however, refused to give details of the alleged irregularities detected by the department.

Commenting on the Bihar government's decision to cancel the contracts of the PHE department, RJD's state unit spokesperson Mrityunjay Tiwary, said, "Chief Minister and JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar and BJP leaders are scared of our leader Tejashwi Yadav. The previous 'Mahagathbandhan' government in the state had executed several people-friendly projects and taken major decisions like employment to 7-8 lakh youths and providing social security to the economically and socially weaker sections of the society."

NDA partners are also "scared" of the impact of the welfare initiatives taken by the previous government, which benefitted lakhs of people in the state, he claimed.

Soon after the formation of the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government in the state, an order was issued to review all the decisions taken by the departments headed by former deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav and then two ministers of RJD — Lalit Yadav and Ramanand Yadav. —*PTI*

DELHI WATER CRISIS

Atishi's indefinite hunger strike ends with hospitalisation

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Delhi Water Minister Atishi's indefinite hunger strike to demand water for the national capital amid its ongoing scarcity came to an end after she was hospitalised due to her worsening health conditions in the early hours of Tuesday.

Atishi, who holds multiple portfolios in the Delhi government, was admitted to the emergency ICU at the Lok Nayak Hospital, and her condition is stable now.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva wished her good health and happiness, even as he said, "She should stop misleading the public."

Giving an update on Atishi's health, the hospital's Medical Director Dr Suresh Kumar said her condition is stable but she is in ICU.

"She was advised hospitalisation last evening after her sugar levels declined and the presence of ketones was detected in her urine.

Water Minister Atishi was shifted to LNJP hospital, on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

She had declined hospitalisation. However, at midnight, as her condition deteriorated and she was drowsy, she was admitted.

She is currently stable and in the ICU. Her blood tests are being done," the senior doctor said. —*PTI*

Ayodhya to soon get ₹650cr 'Museum of Temples'

LUCKNOW, 25 JUNE

The Uttar Pradesh cabinet on Tuesday approved a proposal from the Tata Sons to build a 'museum of temples' in Ayodhya at a cost of Rs 650 crore.

Sharing the details, the Tourism Minister Jaivir Singh said the tourism department would provide the company land for the international-level museum on a 90-year lease for a token money of Re 1."Tata Sons had proposed the project through the Central government, offering to build the museum at a cost of Rs 650 crore under its corporate social responsibility fund," Singh said at a press meet here after the cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The cabinet also approved

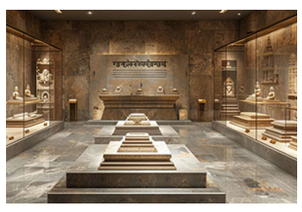


PHOTO: PTI

the company's proposal for other development works in the temple town for additional Rs 100 crore, he added.

Tata Sons is the principal investment holding company and promoter of Tata companies. Other proposals approved during the cabinet meeting included the launch of helicopter services in Lucknow, Prayagraj an Kapilvastu under the public-private partnership (PPP) model by building helipads, Singh said. —*PTI*

YSRCP offices get notices questioning their construction

AMARAVATI, 25 JUNE

Close on the heels of the demolition of the under construction YSRCP central office at Tadepalli in Andhra Pradesh recently, several district offices of the party have started receiving notices from civic bodies, questioning the legitimacy of their construction.

The Opposition party shared a notice it received in the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday about the legitimacy of its Vizianagaram district office from the local civic body.

"You are hereby directed to stop the unauthorized construction work and submit a reply to this notice within seven days from the date of receipt of this notice in writing by you/your authorised agent," said the notice. —*PTI*

SC tells HC don't adjourn Satyendar's bail unnecessarily

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Observing that bail matters should not be adjourned unnecessarily, the Supreme Court on Tuesday said it hoped the Delhi High Court will decide the bail plea of jailed former AAP minister Satyendar Jain in a money laundering case at the next hearing.

A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and SVN Bhatti made the observation while disposing of Jain's plea against the High Court's decision of adjourning the hearing of his bail application for six weeks.

During the hearing, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Jain, said he has challenged the long adjournment order.

Singhvi said a substantial question of law has arisen from the case as to whether an incomplete chargesheet can be filed by the investigating agency to defeat an accused's

PHOTO: PTI

right of default bail.

Justice Misra told Singhvi that the bench is sitting in combination of two judges and therefore cannot decide the issue which is pending consideration of the three-judge bench.

"Let the issue be decided by the High Court and then we will take it up. The High Court will deal with the merits of the case taking into account the factual aspect," the bench said, adding that the impugned order before the court is just a one line adjournment order. —*PTI*

Kerala leader stirs 'Separate Malabar' state controversy

T'PURAM, 25 JUNE

The Sunni Yuvajana Sangam (SYS) leader Mustafa Mundupara has stirred a fresh controversy in Kerala after he advocated the idea of a "separate Malabar state".

Speaking at a protest organised on the issue of lack of seats in class 11 in the Malabar region on Monday, Mundupara said that Southern Kerala and Malabar people are paying the same taxes and should get the same facilities.

Meanwhile, the BJP hit back at Mundupara over his remarks and said that the party will fight any move to divide Kerala.

The Congress and Communist parties in Kerala are on their knees, shamelessly compromising national integrity for votes." —*ANI*

'SIMPLY NOT FOR ME'

SDF's Bhaichung Bhutia quits politics

GANGTOK, 25 JUNE

Indian football icon Bhaichung Bhutia on Tuesday announced that he was quitting politics, following his defeat in the recently held assembly elections in Sikkim.

Bhaichung, the vice president of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), lost to SKM's Rikshal Dorjee Bhutia in the Barfung seat, which marked his sixth electoral defeat.

He joined politics in 2014 when the ruling TMC in West Bengal named him as its can-

Bhaichung Bhutia *PHOTO: PTI*

didate for the Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat. In 2018, he took the plunge into the political arena of his state by forming the Hamro Sikkim Party. Last year, he merged his party with the Pawan Chamling-led SDF.

"After the 2024 election results, I have had the realisation that electoral politics is simply not for me. I am therefore quitting all forms of electoral politics with immediate effect," he added.

Post losing the Darjeeling Lok Sabha constituency to the BJP in 2014, the TMC fielded Bhutia as its candidate for the 2016 West Bengal assembly elections in the Siliguri seat, but he lost to the CPI(M). Following the formation of his party in 2018, he contested the 2019 Sikkim assembly elections from two seats but lost in both. He again unsuccessfully contested the by-election to the Gangtok assembly seat, which was held later that year.

He lost the recently held elections to the SKM by 4,346 votes.

".given a chance, I would have loved to implement and contribute to the growth of the state in a sincere way," he said. —*PTI*

MP ministers to pay income tax; revokes 52-year-old rule

BHOPAL, 25 JUNE

Madhya Pradesh cabinet on Tuesday decided that state ministers will have to pay their Income Tax, instead of the state government bearing such burden. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav in a statement said the cabinet has taken a decision to strike off the 1972 rule, under which the state government was paying the Income Tax on the salaries and perks of ministers.

The cabinet decided that all ministers will pay the Income Tax on their salaries and allowances, Yadav said. State Urban Administration Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya

PHOTO: PTI

said during the cabinet meeting, the chief minister gave a suggestion that the ministers themselves pay their Income Tax. The suggestion was accepted and hence the decision was taken in this regard, he said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Flood situation recedes in Assam; 1.7L still affected

GUWAHATI 25 JUNE

The flood situation has improved in Assam on as the water level of major rivers receded with declining rainfall and the number of people reeling under the deluge decreased to 1.7 lakh, according to a bulletin, on Tuesday. The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said that at least 1,70,377 people are currently affected by the flood in Bajali, Barpeta, Cachar, Darrang, Goalpara, Kamrup, Karimganj, Nagaon and Hojai districts. Over two lakh people were reeling under the deluge in the nine districts of the state on 22 June. The toll in this year's flood, landslide and storm has risen to 40 with the death of one person in Cachar due to drowning in floodwater. The worst affected district is Karimganj with 96,440 people under floodwater. *—PTI*

After WB CM's outburst, cops evict hawkers from street

KOLKATA, 25 JUNE

A day after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed strong displeasure over the encroachment of footpaths in Kolkata and its neighbouring Salt Lake area, police on Tuesday started an eviction drive to remove all obstacles. Hawkers, who had set up stalls to sell food items, garments, and various products across the city and Salt Lake, were told to remove their structures, a police officer said. The Kolkata Police, with the help of earthmovers, started evicting encroachers from different parts of the city, including the footpaths in front of the state-run SSKM Hospital in the Bhowanipore area, Hatibagan and Gariahat areas from Tuesday early morning, he said. The scene in Sector V, the information technology hub, and Secor III in Salt Lake. *—PTI*

Rajkot game zone fire: Shops observe bandh

RAJKOT, 25 JUNE

The main markets in Gujarat's Rajkot city wore a deserted look and various other establishments remained closed on Tuesday as a bandh was observed to mark one month of the fire tragedy at a game zone which claimed 27 lives. Schools, colleges, tuition centres, gold and jewellery markets and other commercial establishments also remained closed to support the 'Rajkot bandh' called by Opposition Congress. Police personnel patrolling was intensified as part of the security arrangements to avoid any untoward incident. Congress MLA Jignesh Mevani, state party President Shaktisinh Gohil and other local leaders came out in different areas of Rajkot to thank businessmen for their support in making the bandh "successful". Congress gave the call for a half-day bandh on Tuesday, to remember those who lost their lives in the fire tragedy at the TRP game zone in Rajkot on 25 May and to demand a higher compensation to the kin of the deceased. *—PTI*

100-ft-long dead whale washed ashore in M'rashtra

PALGHAR, 25 JUNE

A huge crowd gathered at the Arnala beach after nearly a 100-foot-long dead whale was washed ashore in Maharashtra's Palghar district on Tuesday. Some fishermen spotted the dead mammal on Monday afternoon and alerted local police. Authorities of the fisheries and revenue departments were also informed. Police suspected the whale might have been struck by a ship or a large boat, leading to its death and drifting to the shore. The carcass will be disposed of as per the protocol, the police added. *—PTI*

Porsche crash: HC orders release of juvenile accused

The 'drunk' teen allegedly ran over two techies in Pune

MUMBAI, 25 JUNE

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday ordered that the 17-year-old boy allegedly involved in the Porsche car accident in Pune last month be released immediately from an observation home.

The teen, who the police claim was drunk and driving the luxury car when it hit a two-wheeler in the early hours of 19 May killing two techies, was lodged at an observation home in Maharashtra's Pune city. A division bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande quashed the orders issued by the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) remanding the minor to the observation home.

"We allow the petition and order his release. The CCL (Child in Conflict with Law) shall be in the care and custody of the petitioner (paternal aunt)," the court said. The bench noted the JJB's remand orders were illegal and passed without jurisdiction.

The court said amid the "immediate reaction to the accident, the kneejerk reaction and the public outcry, the CCL's age was not considered." "The CCL is under 18 years old. His age needs to be considered," the bench said.

The bench said the court was bound by law and must treat him as any child in conflict with law separately from adult **PHOTO: PTI**

It said the court was bound by law, the aims and objectives of the Juvenile Justice Act and must treat him as any child in conflict with law separately from adult, despite the seriousness of the crime. "CCLs are to be considered differently," the HC said.

The court said the accused is already under rehabilitation, which is the primary objective, and he is already referred to a psychologist and the same shall be continued. The order was passed in a plea filed by the 17-year-old boy's paternal aunt, who claimed he was illegally detained and sought his immediate release.

The boy was granted bail the same day by the JJB and ordered to be under the care and supervision of his parents and grandfather. The police later filed an application before the JJB, seeking amendment of the bail order.

On 22 May, the board ordered the boy to be taken into custody and remanded him to an observation home. The boy's aunt in the plea claimed that because of the public uproar coupled with political agenda, the police deviated from the right course of investigation with regard to the minor boy, thus defeating the entire purpose of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act. *—PTI*

AFTER VIRAL VIDEO

Will run bulldozers on drugs-linked pubs: M'rashtra CM

MUMBAI/PUNE, 24 JUNE

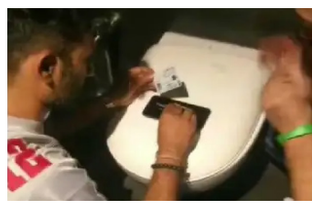
Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday spoke to Pune Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar and directed him to initiate strict action against illegal pubs and bulldoze all structures flouting building rules.

A statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) in Mumbai said Shinde directed the police to initiate renewed action against peddlers to make Pune a drug-free city and use bulldozers against illegal structures linked to narcotic substances.

The operation was carried out at the Liquid Leisure Lounge (L3) located in the posh Fergusson College Road area after a video surfaced on social media showing underage boys consuming drugs in the bar's washroom during a late-night party. Commissioner of Police Amitesh Kumar ordered an immediate probe into the matter, leading to a late-night raid on the establishment.

The Chief Minister directed officials to initiate action against drug sellers and demolish illegal pubs and structures which flout building rules. The owner of L3, Santosh Kamthe, franchisee Ravi Maheshwari, manager Manas Malik, two staffers, and three others were arrested in connection with the case and produced before a Pune Magistrate court and later sent to police custody till June 29 by the court. An inspector, an assistant inspector and two beat marshals from the Shivajinagar police station, who were on night duty, have been suspended in connection with the case. Meanwhile, Dhiraj Ghate, BJP's Pune unit president, said his party will not allow pub culture to flourish in the city, known as a hub of education and IT industry. BJP leader asked the police, the Pune Municipal Corporation and the state excise department to take concrete steps against pub culture.

Ravindra Dhangekar, Congress MLA from the city's Kasba constituency, alleged large quantity of drugs was available in Pune and its trade was going on at the behest of police. A local right-wing group Patit Paawan also vandalised the exterior of the bar. *—PTI*



CCTV footage shows a teen boy consuming drugs at a Pune pub's washroom **PHOTO: X**

ILLEGAL FISHING

1 SL sailor killed & 10 Indian fishermen arrested: SL Navy

COLOMBO, 25 JUNE

At least 10 Indian fishermen were arrested while one Sri Lankan naval sailor was killed in an operation launched by the island nation's authorities to seize a trawler allegedly engaged in illegal fishing in the Sri Lankan waters, authorities said on Tuesday.

The incident came two days after 18 Indian fishermen were arrested by the Sri Lanka Navy for alleged poaching. The operation was launched on Tuesday off the coast of Delft islet in Northern Jaffna when the Sri Lankan Navy received information that an Indian with some fishermen was involved in illegal fishing in the Sri Lankan waters.

"The Navy launched an operation to nab an Indian trawler and fishermen doing illegal fishing in the Sri Lankan waters. However, during the operation, one Sri Lankan sailor suffered chest injuries from an iron rod in the Indian trawler and died," Navy spokesman Captain Gayan Wickremasuriya told PTI. However, in the operation, the Sri Lankan Navy seized the trawler and arrested 10 Indians from it.

The Navy said over 200 Indian fishermen and 27 trawlers have been seized for illegal fishing in the country's waters so far this year. Most of these incidents happen in the Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka's northern tip, a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries.

The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with the Sri Lanka Navy personnel sometimes even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats for illegally entering Sri Lanka's territorial waters. *—PTI*

The Navy said over 200 Indian fishermen and 27 trawlers have been seized **PHOTO: PTI**

EX-KASHMIR BAR ASSOCIATION HEAD HELD FOR MURDER

SRINAGAR, 25 JUNE

A former president of the Kashmir Bar Association Mian Qayoom was arrested on Tuesday in connection with the murder of an advocate in 2020, officials said.

Babar Qadri, who was also a TV news channel panellist, was shot dead at his residence in the city's Hawal area in September 2020. "Qayoom was the main conspirator behind Qadri's killing," he said.

Qayoom is the father-in-law of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court judge Javed Iqbal Wani.

Police had formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe Qadri's murder. The case was later handed over to the Jammu and Kashmir State Investigation Agency (SIA).

In August 2022, police carried out searches at the residences of Qayoom and two other lawyers in Srinagar. Digital devices, bank statements and other documents were seized from them as part of the probe. In September last year, the SIA announced a cash reward of Rs 10 lakh for information about Qadri's killers. *—PTI*

Arrest those who caused ruckus at border: Farmers

CHANDIGARH, 25 JUNE

Farmers protesting at the Shambhu border in Punjab's Patiala district over various demands on Tuesday demanded that a group of people who allegedly tried to create a ruckus at the protest site be arrested.

They alleged that some "miscreants" backed by the Punjab and Haryana governments had hatched a "conspiracy" to defame their ongoing agitation. Farmers had on Sunday alleged that a group of people tried to create a ruckus and attempted to take over the stage at the protest site.

However, the other group, which included traders from Ambala, denied the charge saying they had gone there to highlight their losses due to the Ambala-Ludhiana national highway being blocked and request the farmers lift the blockade.

Farmers have been camping at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since 13 February after their march to Delhi was stopped by security forces. The march was led by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) to press the government to accept their demands such as a legal guarantee on minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

- The other group, which included traders from Ambala, denied the charge saying they had gone there to highlight their losses due to the Ambala-Ludhiana national highway being blocked and request the farmers lift the blockade

Addressing reporters at the Shambhu border, KMM leader Dilbagh Singh Harigarh alleged that some "miscreants" had "hatched a conspiracy to defame" the farmers' stir. "We have not blocked any road. It is the Centre which has created obstacles on the highway," he said, adding the farmers have been demanding since day one that the road be cleared so they can move towards Delhi.

"If the government clears the blockades today, we will go to Delhi," he said. Singh claimed that villagers from the nearby areas were completely supporting the farmers' agitation. *—PTI*

Farmers have been camping at the Shambhu border and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since 13 February **PHOTO: PTI**

Eextensive checks on the aircraft and found no danger **PHOTO: PTI**

Kochi-London Air India flight gets hoax bomb call

KOCHI, 25 JUNE

A London-bound Air India flight received a bomb threat on Tuesday but it turned out to be a hoax and a 29 year-old man suspected of making the threatening call has been apprehended here by authorities, an official said.

Security personnel conducted extensive checks on the aircraft and found no danger, allowing the flight to proceed as planned, a Cochin International Airport spokesperson said in a statement here. According to him, a bomb threat call was received by the Air India call centre in Mumbai early on Tuesday for flight AI 149, scheduled to fly from Cochin to London Gatwick. The alert was promptly communicated to Air India here and the Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) at 1.22 am. Following established protocols, a Bomb Threat Assessment Committee (BTAC) was immediately convened at CIAL. The threat was assessed and declared specific. Following this, thorough security checks were conducted by the Airport Security Group (ASG-CISF), airline security personnel, and inline baggage screening systems. In accordance with the recommendations from the Cochin Airport BTAC, the aircraft was moved to an isolated aircraft parking point, and comprehensive security measures were undertaken. The aircraft was thoroughly checked and cleared for flight. *—PTI*

Jet Airways founder Goyal moves HC seeking extension of interim bail

MUMBAI, 25 JUNE

Jet Airways founder Naresh Goyal has moved the Bombay High Court seeking extension of the two-month interim medical bail granted to him earlier.

On 6 May, the High Court had granted interim bail for two months on medical grounds to Goyal, arrested in a money laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Goyal, 75, has now filed an application seeking extension of the same.

The plea said his medical condition continues to remain poor and that he has also lost his wife to cancer on 16 May. The application came up for hearing on Tuesday before a single bench of Justice Manish Pitale. *—PTI*

TN hooch tragedy: NHRC issues notices to govt, DGP

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Tuesday said it has issued notices to the Tamil Nadu government and police chief in connection with the hooch tragedy in Kallakurichi district and sought a report in a week.

The death toll in the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy climbed to 58 on Monday. As many as 219 people have been admitted to various hospitals. In a statement, NHRC said it has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report that several people lost their lives after "consuming spurious liquor" in Kallakurichi. Reportedly, a large number of people including women are under treatment in hospitals and some of them are in critical condition. The content of the news report, if true, raises a serious issue of violation of the right to life of the victims, it said. States have the exclusive power to regulate the production, manufacture, possession, transport, purchase and sale of intoxicating liquors. *—PTI*

- The death toll in the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy climbed to 58. 219 people have been admitted to various hospitals

HUSBAND DENIES CHARGE

Got 'triple triple' over BJP vote: MP woman

CHHINDWARA, 25 JUNE

A 26-year-old woman in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district has claimed her husband gave her "triple talaq" after being angry with her for supporting the BJP, among other reasons, police said.

The woman's husband, however, has denied the allegations and accused her of having extra-marital affairs. She said she got married nearly eight years back.

Their relations were normal for some time, but later her husband, mother-in-law and sisters-in-law allegedly started taunting and beating her over some or the other issue, Kotwali police station in-charge Umesh Golhani told reporters on Monday.

The woman claimed she was thrown away from the house about one-and-a-half-years back and stayed with her husband in a rented room, he said. Quoting the complaint, Golhani said the woman supported a political party and voted in favour of it, which further angered her husband, after which he gave her 'triple talaq'.

Based on the woman's complaint, the police have registered a case against her husband, mother-in-law and four sisters-in-law under provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act, the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act and the Indian Penal Code, he said.

The woman told reporters here on Monday that her husband had sent the talaq notice, accusing her of being characterless and having illicit affairs, which she claimed were false and baseless. This is not an issue of "instant triple talaq" or supporting any political party as there was no election in 2022, he claimed while speaking to reporters on Monday.

The man said he first gave talaq to his wife on 30 March, 2022, and twice later in October and November 2023, in accordance with the Muslim law. He alleged the woman had been threatening him, maligning his image, ruining the lives of his family members for a long time and levelling such charges to hide her affairs. The man also claimed nobody in his family harassed her as she was living separately since the past three years. *—PTI*

The woman's husband accused her of having extra-marital affairs **PHOTO: PTI**

ASSAM SADHUS PROTEST

Sadhus protest near Kamakhya Temple during Ambubachi Mela, in Guwahati, Assam on Tuesday. The Sadhus complained that the government did not provide them with basic facilities. Ambubachi Mela is the annual celebration of Goddess Kamakyas' menstruation ***PHOTO: PTI***

What happens now after Assange's plea deal?

Dubbed an info warrior by his fans and a spy by the authorities, journalist Julian Assange fathered two children while in asylum at the Ecuador embassy. Here he is seen with Gabriel ***PHOTO: PTI/ @ STELLA MORRIS***

After years of appeals and litigation, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has entered into a plea deal with the US government, according to court documents.

He was facing one count of computer misuse and multiple counts of espionage stemming from his work with WikiLeaks, publishing sensitive US government documents provided by Chelsea Manning. The US government had repeatedly claimed that Assange's actions risked its national security.

Documents filed in the US Federal Court in Saipan, in the Northern Mariana Islands, show Assange will plead guilty to one count under the US Espionage Act. The rest of the charges would be dropped and the request for his extradition to the US would be withdrawn. The US is yet to publicly confirm the deal.

The deal is subject to a hearing and sentencing in Saipan on Wednesday morning, where outlets are reporting Assange will appear in person. He's been released from London's Belmarsh prison, with WikiLeaks sharing vision of him en route to London's Stanstead Airport.

Assange has been granted bail by the UK High Court.

Upon his guilty plea, Assange will be sentenced to 5 years in prison: time he's already served in Belmarsh. It puts an end to all the ongoing legal action, including the proceedings in the UK High Court and the extradition order from the UK Home Secretary.

The plea deal seems largely consistent with rumours circulating earlier this year. It was widely assumed Assange would plead guilty to one charge, which was expected to be a misdemeanour charge of mishandling documents rather than under the US Espionage Act.

This is significant as it's a national security offence for which he's served more than five years behind bars. This will place limitations on his future travel, including to the US, which is unlikely to grant him a visa.

It also sets a practical precedent, if not necessarily a legal one, that a publisher can be convicted under the Espionage Act in the US. While the devil will be in the details of the deal, this is what many journalists were afraid of.

It means somebody who did nothing more than receive and publish information has been convicted under major US national security laws. If the deal had been about the Computer Misuse Act, this scenario wouldn't have arisen. The concern may be that now it's been done once, it could happen again.

We may never know the US' full reasoning, but there are several possibilities as to why it decided to go to a plea deal and not continue with litigation.

Although not confirming or denying the existence of a plea deal just yet, a spokesperson for the government reiterated Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's position that there was "nothing to be gained from his [Assange's] continued incarceration".

The fact the government has been consistent on this for about two years has changed the political environment for this prosecution.

There's a growing consensus in the US, even among some Republicans, that it's not in the public interest to continue.

The UK general election will be held next week, and given the anticipated change of government there, the extradition order may have been reconsidered anyway. All of this would likely have informed the US' cost-benefit analysis to ultimately bring the Assange saga to an end.

What happens now?

Following the hearing in Saipan, Assange will be free to return to Australia. The court was chosen because of Assange's opposition to travelling to the continental US, as well as its proximity to Australia.

Assange will likely find it difficult to travel in the future, given his serious criminal conviction. This may also apply in the UK, where he has also been convicted of absconding from bail, for which he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

Looking further ahead, it's entirely possible he will be pardoned by the US president, whomever it ends up being after the US election in November. The US allows much more discretion than most in the use of pardons.

For now, Assange will face court in Saipan and come home to Australia, albeit with a serious criminal record.

—The Conversation

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Melting glaciers, warmer Himalayas to impact cities

The rise in forest fires is further warming Himalayas ***PHOTO: PTI***

Climate change is causing a significant reduction in snowfall in the Himalayas and accelerating glacier melt, which will have wide-reaching consequences for cities such as Delhi that are already facing a water crisis, an Uttarakhand legislator warned on Tuesday.

At a press conference in New Delhi, BJP's Tehri MLA Kishore Upadhyay cited studies predicting that the Himalayas could be devoid of snow in the next two to three decades.

He also said climate change-induced rapid glacier melt is affecting the strength and pattern of the Indian monsoon.

Upadhyay has launched the Global Himalayan Organisation to raise awareness about the critical state of the mountain range.

Avinash Mishra, former adviser to NITI Aayog and a member of the initiative, cited a report by the Indian Space Research Organisation and said more than 27 per cent of the identified glacial lakes in the Himalayas, 130 of which are located in India, have significantly expanded since 1984.

"The burning of fossil fuels is accelerating glacier melt and the expansion of glacial lakes, increasing the risk of glacial lake outburst floods. The rise in forest fires is further warming the Himalayas," Mishra said.

He added that reduced snowfall in the Himalayas will have a severe impact on industries along the rivers originating from the mountains and on agriculture.

- In the past, the mountains would get six to seven feet of snowfall. Now, it has declined to just one to two feet. Reason for this is the large-scale deforestation and concretisation in lower latitudes

Mishra warned that the climate change-driven glacier melt will affect not only the Himalayas but also cities such as Delhi. "Even the president's house will not be safe."

"The rapid melting of glaciers and reduced river flow due to declining snowfall will have a wide and far-reaching impact, not only on Himalayan villages and cities but also on urban areas such as Delhi," BJP MLA Upadhyay said.

He also blamed deforestation in the plains for contributing to warming in the hills and the subsequent glacier melt.

"In the past, the mountains would get six to seven feet of snowfall. Now, it has declined to just one to two feet. I am not blaming anyone but one reason for this is the large-scale deforestation and concretisation in the lower latitudes," Upadhyay said.

He said a major solution to this problem lay in protecting the Himalayan forests and ecosystems, which serve as a crucial carbon sink. *—PTI*

The rapid melting of glaciers and reduced river flow due to declining snowfall will have a wide and far-reaching impact on Himalayan villages and cities like Delhi ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Govt panel has mammoth task of resolving students' concerns

Students from various states protest against irregularities in NEET, including alleged paper leak in Lucknow, on Tuesday; UGC-NET was also cancelled as the exam was compromised ***PHOTO: PTI***

Education Ministry's panel on exam reforms will engage with parents and students to understand their concerns and challenges about the examination process, amid a raging row over alleged irregularities in competitive exams NEET and NET, according to officials.

The seven-member panel headed by former ISRO chief R Radhakrishnan had its first meeting on Monday evening.

"The first priority for us is to elicit from the students and parents in the country their concerns and suggestions.

We are going to engage with them as far as possible in person, or through electronic media. And in the next fortnight, we would like to consolidate this," Radhakrishnan told reporters on Tuesday.

"The next priority for us is to quickly build a robust system for starting the tests. We are also looking at the future, especially to develop in this country a robust system, a tamper-proof system, a system with zero error and a system that will lessen the difficulties and stress for the students with adequate flexibility built into it," he added.

- Panel will make recommendations on reforms in the mechanism of the examination process, improvement in data security protocols & functioning of NTA

According to sources present in the meeting, the committee took stock of the current situation and challenges faced by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

"The panel was apprised of the current processes and functioning of the agency. The panel also looked into the statistics provided by the NTA about the multiple exams conducted by it and the number of candidates appearing for each exam," a source said.

"The panel also looked into which exams are conducted in pen and paper mode and which are conducted as Computer-Based Tests (CBT), and the nuances of both modes," the source added.

During its meeting, the committee is also believed to have discussed cybersecurity issues and challenges posed by the darknet, where the UGC-NET exam question paper was first leaked forcing the Education Ministry to cancel it the day after it was conducted.

According to ministry officials, the reforms suggested by the panel are likely to be implemented by the next exam cycle.

"It is a mammoth task and has to be done with complete preparation to ensure there are no loopholes but it is also the most important priority of the ministry right now. The panel will submit its report within two months and we will draw an action plan to implement the reforms by the next exam cycle," an official said on the condition of anonymity.

In the line of fire over the alleged irregularities in medical entrance examination NEET and PhD entrance NET, the Centre had on Saturday notified the panel to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations through the NTA.

While NEET is under scanner over several irregularities, including alleged leaks, UGC-NET was cancelled as the ministry received inputs that the integrity of the exam was compromised.

Two other exams -- CSIR-UGC NET and NEET PG -- were cancelled as a pre-emptive step.

The panel will make recommendations on reforms in the mechanism of the examination process, improvement in data security protocols and the structure and functioning of the NTA.

The panel also includes former AIIMS Delhi director Randeep Guleria, Central University of Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor B J Rao, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Civil Engineering at IIT Madras K Ramamurthy, People Strong co-founder and Karmayogi Bharat board member Pankaj Bansal, IIT Delhi Dean of Student Affairs Aditya Mittal and Ministry of Education Joint Secretary Govind Jaiswal.

The committee has also been tasked with examining the existing security protocols related to the setting of the papers and other processes for different examinations and making recommendations to enhance the robustness of the system.

In a recent update, the CBI on Monday took over five new cases of alleged malpractices in the medical entrance exam NEET-UG that were being investigated by police in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bihar, as the political storm intensified with the opposition gearing up to confront the government in Parliament on the paper leak issue. *—PTI*

AUS WAITS FOR ASSANGE'S RETURN

Support for Assange has grown in Aus during the 7 years he spent in UK

MELBOURNE, 25 JUNE

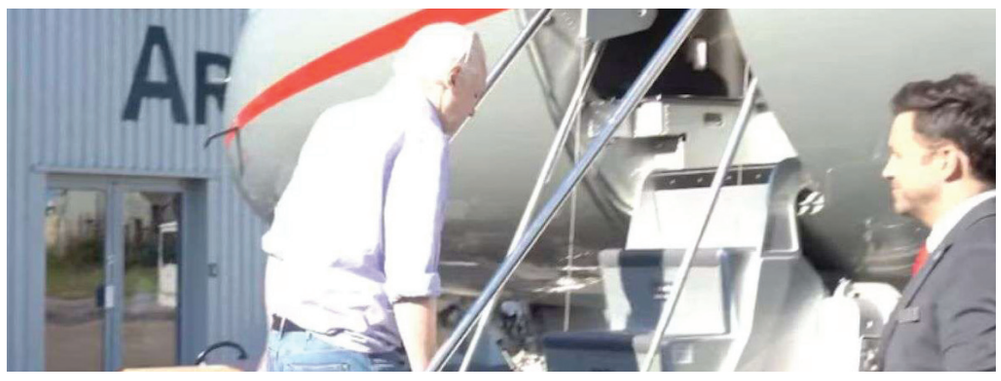
Australian leaders cautiously welcomed an expected plea agreement that could set free Julian Assange, who was pursued for years over WikiLeaks' publication of a trove of classified documents.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Tuesday there was nothing to be gained by keeping the Australian incarcerated.

Public support for Assange has grown in Australia during the seven years he has spent avoiding extradition to the United States by hiding in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London and later during his five years in Belmarsh Prison.

Albanese has been lobbying since his government was elected in 2022 for the United States to end its prosecution of Assange.

Assange's plight was seen as a test of Albanese's leverage with the administration of US President Joe Biden.



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange boards a plane after he was freed from the UK's high-security Belmarsh prison on Monday and taken to the airport, from where he flew out to US **PHOTO: @WIKILEAKS/X**

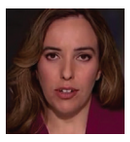
Albanese told Parliament that Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Stephen Smith had flown with Assange from London.

"The case has dragged on for too long," Albanese added.

Meanwhile, US presidential candidate Robert F Kennedy Jr. has expressed concerns about the plea deal calling it "bad news" and a "big blow to freedom of the press."

His wife, Stella Assange, also took to social media, sharing a video montage of her husband in a car and then boarding a plane. Stella said she is "elated" .In an interview with the BBC, Stella said, "it's just incredible, it feels like it's not real".

Stella joined the WikiLeaks legal team in 2011 since the start of Assange's captivity. In 2015, she began a relationship with him, which was kept a secret. She met him in secrecy during his seven-year period of political asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. The couple conceived two children while he was in asylum, the first being born in 2017, and the second in 2019.



Julian is free!!!! Words cannot express our immense gratitude to YOU - yes YOU, who have all mobilised for years and years to make this come true. THANK YOU. THANK YOU. THANK YOU

—Stella Assange, Julian Assange's wife

Assange's mother, Christine Assange, said the plea deal "shows the importance and power of quiet diplomacy.

After more than five years in a 2x3 metre cell, isolated 23 hours a day, he will soon reunite with his wife, Stella Assange, and their children, who have only known their father from behind bars," Wikileaks said. *—AP*

TIMELINE

- **2006 -** Assange co-founds Wikileaks - a web-based "dead-letterbox" for would-be leakers
- **April 2010 -** Wikileaks releases footage of a US helicopter firing on civilians in Iraq
- **August 2010 -** Sweden issues arrest warrant for Assange on two sexual assault allegations - which Assange says are "without basis"
- **22 October 2010 -** Iraq War Logs released 391,000 documents from the US military
- **December 2010 -** Assange is arrested in London and bailed soon after. He begins appealing the international arrest warrant
- **May 2012 -** UK Supreme Court rules he should be extradited to Sweden to face questioning over the allegations
- **June 2012 -** Assange enters the Ecuadorean embassy in London
- **August 2012 -** Assange is granted asylum and, while addressing reporters from the balcony of the embassy, demands that the US drop its "witch-hunt"
- **February 2016 -** A UN panel rules that Assange has been "arbitrarily detained" by UK and Swedish authorities and calls for his freedom
- **May 2017 -** Sweden's director of public prosecutions says sexual assault probe is being dropped
- **October 2018 -** Assange is given house rules by Ecuadorean embassy, the same month it is revealed he is launching legal action against the government of Ecuador for violating his "fundamental rights and freedoms"
- **April 2019 -** The Metropolitan Police enter the embassy - with the Ecuadorean government's permission - and detain Assange for "failing to surrender to the court" over a warrant issued in 2012
- **May 2019 -** Assange is sentenced to 50 weeks in Belmarsh Prison for breaching his bail conditions
- **May 2019 -** Sweden reopens sexual assault investigation and the US reveals its charges against Assange. He begins fighting extradition in the UK courts
- **November 2019 -** Swedish prosecutors discontinue their rape investigation
- **January 2021 -** A British judge rejects a US request to extradite Assange because of the impact on his mental health. In December, the US win their bid to overturn the ruling
- **June 2022 -** The UK government orders the extradition of Assange to the US, but his case continues to be tied up in appeals
- **February 2024 -** Assange's lawyers launch a final legal bid to stop his extradition at the High Court
- **May 2024 -** High Court rules Assange can bring a new appeal against extradition to the US
- **24 June 2024 -** Assange is released from prison on bail and boards a flight to a US territory in the Pacific to formalise a plea deal

SIX BIG LEAKS FROM ASSANGE'S WIKILEAKS

US ARMY MANUAL FOR GUANTANAMO PRISON CAMP

Date: Nov 2007

THE LEAK: A 238-page Army manual from 2003 on "standard operating procedures" for the Camp Delta prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.
The revelations: The manual showed the Army kept some prisoners from Red Cross inspectors and held new prisoners in isolation for 2 weeks.

5,70,000 MESSAGES SENT ON 9/11

Date: Nov 2009

THE LEAK: WikiLeaks published half a million pager messages sent within a day around 11 Sept, 2001, terrorist attacks that killed 3,000.
THE REVELATIONS: The messages included exchanges from "Pentagon, FBI, FEMA and New York Police Department" officials.

VIDEO OF US HELICOPTER FIRE KILLING CIVILIANS IN IRAQ

Date: April 2010

THE LEAK: Video from a 2007 US Apache helicopter attack in Baghdad, Iraq, that killed 11 civilians, including a Reuters photographer and his driver.
THE REVELATIONS: Army soldier Bradley Manning was arrested for the release of the video and classified material about civilian deaths.

IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN WAR DOCUMENTS

Date: July and Oct 2010

THE LEAKS: 90,000 documents on US military action in Afghanistan and later published 400,000 documents from Iraq war.
THE REVELATIONS: It revealed civilians' killing, the hunt for al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and Iran's backing of militants in Iraq.

STATE DEPARTMENT CABLES

Date: Nov 2010 to Sept 2011

THE LEAKS: 2,50,000 unredacted US diplomatic cables from Dec 1966 to Feb 2010 were released. It was referred to as "Cablegate."
THE REVELATIONS: It claimed that US had conducted secret drone strikes in Yemen. It revealed that US was trying to get information on United Nations representatives. The cables also revealed that Saudi had called for airstrikes on Iranian nuclear installations.

STOLEN 2016 EMAILS

Date: July and Oct 2016

THE LEAKS: On 22 July, 2016, WikiLeaks released 20,000 Democratic National Committee (DNC) emails and on 7 Oct, 2016. It released 2,000 emails from Clinton campaign manager John Podesta.
The revelations: The emails claimed DNC had favoured Clinton over her rival, Vermont Sen Bernie Sanders and DNC Chairwoman Donna Brazile had given Clinton campaign debate questions in advance.

Cops arrest accused who shot Andra man dead in store

HOUSTON, 25 JUNE

Police in the US state of Texas have arrested a man in the killing of a 32-year-old Indian national during a robbery at a convenience store in Dallas. Dasari Gopikrishna, who came to the US only eight months ago, was fatally shot at the convenience store in Pleasant Grove, Dallas, on 21 June. He hailed from the Yajali village of the Bapatla district in Andhra Pradesh.

Police have arrested 21-year-old Davonta Mathis for murdering Gopikrishna. He faces capital murder charges for fatally shooting Gopikrisna multiple times, including in the head. During the robbery, Mathis walked into the store, approached the counter and shot Gopikrishna. He stole items before running away, police said. Gopikrishna was taken to the hospital in critical condition and later died. *—AP*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Indian electrician wins Rs 2.25 crore jackpot in Dubai

DUBAI, 25 JUNE

A 46-year-old electrician from India has bagged an AED 1 million (approx Rs 2.25 crore) cash prize in Dubai, after years of saving and investing wisely, a local news report said on Tuesday. Nagendrum Borugadda, from Andhra Pradesh, has been saving AED 100 with National Bonds through direct debit since 2019. Borugadda, who has been living in the UAE since 2017, is the father of an 18-year-old daughter and a 16-year-old son, a Khaleej Times report said. "I came to the UAE to build a better life for my family and provide good education to my children. This win feels surreal," he was quoted by the newspaper as saying. *—PTI*

Ultra-Orthodox Israelis must join Army

JERUSALEM, 25 JUNE

Israel's Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled unanimously that the military must begin drafting ultra-Orthodox men for compulsory service. This landmark decision could lead to the collapse of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition as Israel continues to wage war in Gaza.

The historic ruling effectively puts an end to a decades-old system that granted ultra-Orthodox men broad exemptions from military service while maintaining mandatory enlistment for the country's secular Jewish majority. The arrangement, deemed discriminatory by critics, has created a deep chasm in Israel's Jewish majority over who should shoulder the burden of protecting the country.

Politically powerful Ultra-Orthodox parties are key partners in Netanyahu's governing coalition **PHOTO: X/@ISRAELIPM**

The court struck down a law that codified exemptions in 2017, but repeated court extensions and government delaying tactics over a replacement dragged out a resolution for years. The court ruled that in the absence of a law, Israel's compulsory military service applies to the ultra-Orthodox like any other citizen. These exemptions have long been a source of anger among the secular public, a divide that has widened during the eight-month-old war, as the military has called up tens of thousands of soldiers and says it needs all the manpower it can get. Over 600 soldiers have been killed since 7 October attack. Politically powerful ultra-Orthodox parties, key partners in Netanyahu's governing coalition, oppose any change in the current system. *—AP*

Civilian deaths: ICC issues arrest warrants for Russians

THE HAGUE, 25 JUNE

The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants Tuesday for Russia's former defense minister and its military chief of staff for attacking civilian targets in Ukraine.

The court is accusing former Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and chief of staff Gen Valery Gerasimov of war crimes and the crime against humanity of inhumane acts.

The court said in a statement that warrants were issued because judges considered there were reasonable grounds to believe that the men are responsible for "missile strikes carried out by the Russian armed forces against the Ukrainian electric infrastructure" from October 10, 2022 until at least 9 March, 2023.

"During this time-frame, a large number of strikes against numerous electric power plants and sub-stations were carried out by the Russian armed forces in multiple locations in Ukraine," the court added. Last year, the court also issued a warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine. *—PTI*

Additonally, at least 1.57 billion items of PPE provided by Full Support Healthcare will never be used again **PHOTO: @BXcoalition**

In 'biggest waste', UK burns £1.4B PPE kits

LONDON, 25 JUNE

About £1.4 billion worth of personal protective equipment (PPE) has been destroyed or written off in what is understood to be the most wasteful government deal of the pandemic in the United Kingbom.

Figures obtained by the BBC reveal that at least 1.57 billion items of PPE provided by Full Support Healthcare, an NHS supplier based in Northamptonshire, will never be used, despite being manufactured to the proper standard.

Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), which was responsible for purchasing and delivering Covid PPE, said it was unable to provide a statement due to the pre-election period.

The Labour Party described the contract as a "staggering waste" while the Liberal Democrats said it was a "colossal misuse of public funds".

Full Support Healthcare agreed a £1.78bn deal in April 2020 to deliver face masks, respirators, eye protection and aprons - the largest Covid PPE order from a single supplier, accounting for 13 per cent of the government's total spend.

Before the pandemic, the company, which was already a specialist manufacturer of PPE, had 25 employees and annual profits of £800,000. BBC Investigations made a series of requests over a six-month period under the Freedom of Information Act to NHS Supply Chain, which manages the delivery of healthcare products. The responses reveal that of the 2.02 billion items of PPE provided by Full Support, only 232 million items have been dispatched to the NHS or other care settings. Some 749 million items have already been burned or destroyed, "including by energy from waste", and a further 825 million are classified as excess stock "where disposal and recycling are possible outcomes". *—BBC News*

S Korea fumes as North dumps thrash

SEOUL, 25 JUNE

- North Korea floated huge balloons carrying plastic bags of rubbish into South Korea.

South Korea on Tuesday threatened to restart anti-Pyongyang frontline propaganda broadcasts in the latest bout of Cold War-style campaigns between the rivals after North Korea resumed its trash-carrying balloon launches.

On Monday night, North Korea floated huge balloons carrying plastic bags of rubbish across the border in its fifth such campaign since late May — an apparent response to South Korean activists flying political leaflets via balloons.

In a Tuesday speech marking a Korean War anniversary, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol called North Korea's balloon activities "a despicable and irrational provocation." He said South Korea will maintain a firm military readiness to repel any provocations by North Korea.

Later Tuesday, Yoon boarded a visiting US aircraft carrier docked at a southeastern port and told American and South Korean troops there that the two countries' alliance is the world's greatest and can defeat any enemy. Yoon became the first sitting South Korean president to board a US aircraft carrier since 1994.

South Korea's military said North Korea floated about 350 balloons in its latest campaign, and about 100 of them eventually landed in South Korean soil, mostly in Seoul and nearby areas. Seoul is about 40-50 kilometres away from the border. The military said the trash carried by the North Korean balloons were mostly papers and that no hazardous items were found. *—AP*

CHINA 1ST TO BRING ROCKS FROM MOON'S FAR SIDE

BEIJING, 25 JUNE

China's Chang'e-6 lunar probe module returned to Earth on Tuesday, completing its historic mission to collect the first-ever samples from the Moon's unexplored far side, in a major step forward for the country's ambitious space programme.

The return capsule landed precisely in the designated area in Siziwang Banner, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at 2:07 pm (Beijing Time), operating normally, and "the mission is a complete success," China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced.

Chinese President Xi Jinping extended congratulations on the complete success of the Chang'e-6 mission, said state-run Xinhua news agency.

China's probe was the first to reach and collect samples from the far side of the moon.

The development came after India in August 2023 became the first country to land near the little-explored lunar South Pole region when its Chandrayaan-3's lander, carrying the Pragyaan rover, successfully landed there.

China is the only country to have landed on the far side of the Moon, having done so before in 2019. The far side - which faces away from Earth - is technically challenging to reach due to its distance, giant craters and few flat surfaces. *—PTI*

2ND INCIDENT IN A MONTH

Korea Air flight drops 27,000ft in 15 minutes injuring 17 people

SOUEL, 25 JUNE

A Korean Air flight had to be diverted due to a severe fault on Saturday after it descended 26,900ft in just 15 minutes, resulting in the hospitalisation of 17 passengers.

Passengers on the Korean Air flight KE189 finally arrived safely in Taichung, Taiwan, a day after it was diverted back to the Incheon International Airport.

Nearly 50 minutes into the flight on Saturday, a fault in the Boeing 737 Max 8's pressurisation system reportedly triggered alarms inside the flight. Passengers experienced hyperventilation and ear pain, with 17 people requiring hospitalisation upon landing in Taichung, Taiwan. Earlier this month, Singapore flight experienced severe turbulence causing it to descend 1,800 meters in three minutes.

—Courtesy, The Independent

PHOTO: X@INDYLIFE

PHOTO: PIXABY

Gold rises ₹70; silver plunges ₹400

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Gold prices rose Rs 70 to Rs 72,550 per 10 grams in the local market on Tuesday in line with firm global trends, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 72,480 per 10 grams on Monday. However, silver prices plunged by Rs 400 to Rs 91,500 per kg. In the previous session, it had settled at Rs 91,900 per kg. Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,324 per ounce, up USD 6 from the previous close. Gold traded in a narrow range on Tuesday under gloomy market sentiment, Gandhi said. However, silver was down at USD 29.40 per ounce. It had ended at USD 29.47 per ounce in the previous session.—*PTI*

Rupee settles 3P higher at 83.44 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 25 JUNE

The rupee appreciated 3 paise against the US dollar on Tuesday, tracking a firm trend in domestic equities amid stable global crude oil prices. However, a strengthening American currency in the overseas market weighed on the local unit and restricted the up move, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.46 and hit the intraday high of 83.41 and a low of 83.48 against the greenback during the session. It finally settled at 83.44 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 3 paise from its previous close.On Monday, the rupee appreciated 10 paise to settle at 83.47 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, was trading 0.03 per cent higher at 105.50.—*PTI*

Jeffery Archer, Amish Tripathi plan $25K literary award

LONDON, 25 JUNE

Two well-known bestselling authors, Lord Jeffrey Archer and Amish Tripathi, have teamed up with UK-headquartered India Global Forum (IGF) to launch a brand-new USD 25,000 literary award to nurture talent in contemporary Indian fiction and celebrate storytelling that makes a significant contribution to the India story. The IGF Archer-Amish Award for Literature was announced on Monday, the inaugural day of the week-long forum in London. It will open to nominations later in the year, when the criteria for entries and jury will be laid out, and the winner of the prize money will be declared at the next IGF London summit in 2025."This award aims to encourage the gift of storytelling itself, and that is one of the key drivers. This will make it very different from other awards which might reward those whose books are boring but use good language. —*PTI*

ZYOD bags ₹150 cr funding to expand global ops

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

B2B apparel manufacturing platform ZYOD on Tuesday said it has raised USD 18 million (Rs 150 crore) in a funding round led by RTP Global. The Series A round also saw participation from repeat investors Lightspeed and Alteria Capital and new investors Stride Ventures, Stride One, and Trifecta Capital, the business-to-business (B2B) clothing manufacturing platform said in a statement. The Gurugram-based startup said it aims to deploy the new capital towards growing its operations across more than 40 countries. Co-founder Ritesh Khandelwal said the brand aims to double its customer base and introduce 100,000 unique designs every month.—*PTI*

Sensex breaches 78K mark for the 1st time

Nifty too settles at new all-time high

MUMBAI, 25 JUNE

Benchmark Sensex breached the historic 78,000 level for the first time while Nifty settled at a new record high on Tuesday on buying in blue-chip bank stocks and Reliance Industries amid firm trends in Asian markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 712.44 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 78,053.52. During the day, the benchmark soared 823.63 points or 1 per cent to hit a fresh lifetime high of 78,164.71.

The Nifty went up by 183.45 points or 0.78 per cent to settle at a record closing peak of 23,721.30. During the day, it climbed 216.3 points or 0.91 per cent to hit a new all-time high of 23,754.15.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finserv, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries and Infosys were the biggest gainers.

Power Grid, Asian Paints, Tata Steel, Nestle, Maruti and JSW Steel were among the laggards.In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled higher while Shanghai ended lower.European markets were trading in the negative territory. US markets ended on a mixed note on Monday.

India recorded a current account surplus of USD 5.7 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP in the March quarter, the Reserve Bank of India said on Monday.This is the first time in ten quarters that the crucial metric of the country's external strength has turned into surplus mode.

"A positive news from the market perspective is the current account turning surplus in Q4 FY24. This will take away the pressure on the rupee and pave the way for FII inflows when clarity emerges on the Fed rate cuts," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.44 per cent to USD 85.63 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 653.97 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark ended 131.18 points or 0.17 per cent higher at 77,341.08 on Monday. The Nifty went up 36.75 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 23,537.85. —*PTI*

The Nifty went up by 183.45 points or 0.78 per cent to settle at a record closing peak of 23,721.30 PHOTO: PTI

CAPEX INCREASES

Adani to invest ₹1.3L cr in port, cement, airport, media

AHMEDABAD, 25 JUNE

Adani group plans to invest about Rs 1.3 lakh crore across its portfolio companies this fiscal as it doubles down on its USD 100 billion investment guidance over the next seven to 10 years to grow businesses, group CFO said on Tuesday.

The investment across portfolio companies that range from ports to energy, airports, commodities, cement and media will be 70 per cent met through internal cash generation and the remaining through debt, Group CFO Jugeshinder 'Robbie' Singh told reporters here.

The group will look to refinance USD 3-4 billion of debt maturing in the year and raise an additional USD 1 billion in project financing, he said, adding the annual USD 2-2.5 billion of equity infusion by bringing in new investors is also likely to continue.

"This year will be more about asset completion," he said.

Renewable energy firm Adani Green will complete six to seven GW project, while the solar wafer manufacturing unit will attain scale. Also, the new airport at Mumbai will be completed, he said.

The projected capital expenditure or capex for 2024-25 (April 2024 to March 2025) fiscal is 40 per cent higher than what the portfolio is estimated to have incurred in FY24.

The group had previously guided a USD 100 billion capex over the next seven to -10 years. Most of this investment is going to go into the group's fast growing businesses -- renewable, green hydrogen and airports and infrastructure, he said.

As much as 70 per cent of the planned capex will go into its green portfolio -- primarily renewable power, green hydrogen, green evacuation. Of the remaining 30 per cent, the majority will be spent towards airports and ports businesses.

Adani Group companies posted a record 45 per cent rise in pre-tax profit (Ebitda) to Rs 82,917 crore (about USD 10 billion) in FY24, Singh said.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- The group will look to refinance USD 3-4 billion of debt maturing in the year and raise an additional USD 1 billion in project financing

ADANI GREEN TO USE ₹2L CR IN ENERGY SECTOR

AHMEDABAD, 25 JUNE

Adani group is looking to invest about Rs 2 lakh crore by 2030 to build 40 gigawatts of renewable energy generation capacity, as it targets net zero emissions across businesses by 2050, top officials said on Tuesday.

The apple-to-airport conglomerate currently has over 10 GW of capacity to generate electricity from renewable sources like sunlight and wind energy and is looking to add 6-7 GW every year to reach 50 GW by 2030.

"Considering the ballpark number of Rs 5 crore per megawatt, the investment could be in the range of Rs 2 lakh crore by 2030," Adani Green Energy Ltd Executive Director Sagar Adani told reporters here.

Its CEO Amit Singh said the company would also build a 5 GW pump storage capacity to peak power demand during the night when sunlight is not available, and wind intensity is not strong enough to turn wind turbines to produce electricity. The carbon credits renewable capacity generates, together will help turn the group net zero by 2050. —*PTI*

Tata Motors, Bajaj Finance tie up for vehicle financing

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Tata Motors on Tuesday said it has partnered with Bajaj Finance Ltd for offering financing solutions across its entire commercial vehicle portfolio.

The company has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bajaj Finance Ltd, part of Bajaj Finserv Ltd, for the same and customers will benefit from the latter's wide reach, competitive interest rates, flexi loan and digitally-enabled loan processing, Tata Motors said in a statement.With Bajaj Finance's wide network in rural and urban areas, customers will have easy access to financing solutions as per their requirements, he added.

Bajaj Finance Deputy Managing Director Anup Saha said, "... We aim to make the process of purchasing a commercial vehicle accessible and hassle-free. We are confident that the partnership will empower more commercial vehicle owners with financing solutions."

Tata Motors offers a range of sub 1-tonne to 55-tonne cargo vehicles and 10-seater to 51-seater mass mobility solutions, ranging in small commercial vehicles and pickups, trucks and buses segments. On the other hand, Bajaj Finance is a diversified Non-Banking Financial Company(NBFC) with presence across payments, serving over 8.36 crore customers. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

JSW STEEL INVESTS $110M TO MODERNISE US MILL

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

JSW Steel on Tuesday said its subsidiary JSW Steel USA plans to invest USD 110 million to modernise its steel plate mill in Baytown, Texas with new equipment and sustainable technology.

These investments will enable the production of high-quality monopile steel plates to support the US administration's new actions to expand offshore wind energy by deploying 30 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind by 2030, enough to power 10 million homes with clean energy, the company said. Steel products made through this investment are aligned with "Buy America" requirements for niche grades and sophisticated applications such as hydrocarbon pipelines, offshore wind towers and platforms, JSW Steel said. —*PTI*

TO AUGMENT 5G

Tenth spectrum auction begins for radiowaves worth ₹96,238 crore

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Auction for Rs 96,238 crore worth spectrum began on Tuesday that is expected to see firms like Airtel and Reliance Jio bidding to acquire airwaves that will help augment their 5G services.

It is the 10th spectrum auction since the process for sale of radiowaves started through an online bidding process in 2010.

"The government begins the auction of Spectrum for Telecom Services today at 10am," an official statement said on Tuesday.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has initiated the spectrum Auction and notice inviting applications (NIA) was issued on 8 March.

"The Ministry of Communications announced that the following spectrum bands will go up for bidding in the upcoming auction - 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2500 MHz, 3300 MHz and 26 GHz. Total quantum of spectrum being auctioned is 10,522.35 MHz in various bands valuing Rs 96,238.45 crores at reserve prices," the statement said.

The 3300 Mhz band and 26 Mhz band are seen as suitable bands for 5G services.

Reliance Jio has deposited the highest earnest money of Rs 3,000 crore for the spectrum auction, which provides the company with the potential to bid for maximum radio waves.

According to pre-qualified bidder details released by the Department of Telecommunications, Bharti Airtel has submitted the earnest money deposit (EMD) of Rs 1,050 crore and Vodafone Idea (VIL) of Rs 300 crore.

Telecom industry body Cellular Operators Association of India Director General SP Kochhar said the 5G auctions will catalyze the rapid rollout of 5G services across the country, leading to enhanced coverage and vastly improved connectivity. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Smaller towns to soon get $1B firms: Accel

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Several large, USD 1 billion-plus companies will be built over the coming decade, serving promising domains such as e-commerce, financial services and rural healthcare in smaller towns and cities, says Anand Daniel, a partner in leading venture capital firm Accel.

The growth story in these largely untapped non-urban locations is now unfolding amid marked advancements in online, financial and delivery infrastructure, he adds in his blogpost "The imminent rise of startups catering to the Bharat".

Accel is also bullish on companies dabbling in edtech, upskilling and recruitment solutions as well as content platforms and consumer companies leveraging AI for these high-potential regional markets. The leading early-stage fund, which has invested in marquee companies, including Flipkart, Swiggy and Urban Company, is placing bold bets on 'Bharat', a market it defines as middle-income households in Tier 2, Tier 3, and rural areas. According to Daniel, there is significant opportunity if a startup can provide exceptional value for this target group at the right price points and keeping regional dynamics in mind.

"Meesho, Physics Wallah, and Zudio are just the sunrise. Many more companies tailored for Bharat are yet to emerge," Daniel writes. —*PTI*

- The growth story in these largely untapped non-urban locations is now unfolding amid marked advancements

The collaboration will follow a contract inked with SpacePixxel Technologies

'RESTRICTED COMPETITION'

EU says Microsoft breached antitrust law

LONDON, 25 JUNE

Microsoft violated European Union antitrust rules with "possibly abusive" practices by tying its Teams messaging and videoconferencing app to its widely used business software, the bloc said.

The European Commission said Monday it informed Microsoft of its preliminary view that the US tech giant has been "restricting competition" by bundling Teams with core office productivity applications such as Office 365 and Microsoft 365.

The commission, the 27-nation bloc's top antitrust enforcer, said it suspects Microsoft might have granted Teams a "distribution advantage" by not giving customers a choice on whether to have Teams when they purchased the software. The advantage might have been widened by limits on the ability of rival messaging apps to work with Microsoft software, it said.

"We are concerned that Microsoft may be giving its own communication product Teams an undue advantage over competitors, by tying it to its popular productivity suites for businesses," Margrethe Vestager, the commission's executive vice-president for competition policy, said in a statement.

"And preserving competition for remote communication and collaboration tools is essential as it also fosters innovation on these markets."

Microsoft made some changes last year in an effort to head off an penalty, including offering the software packages without Teams for European customers. But the commission said Tuesday the changes are not enough to address its concerns and that it needs to do more to "restore competition."

"Having unbundled Teams and taken initial interoperability steps, we appreciate the additional clarity provided today and will work to find solutions to address the Commission's remaining concerns." Microsoft President Brad Smith said in a prepared statement.

In April, the company also gave customers worldwide the option to get Microsoft 365 and Office 365 without Teams. The two software suites include programs like Word, Excel and Outlook.

Microsoft now has a chance to respond to the accusations, formally known as a statement of objections, before the commission makes its final decision. The company could face a fine worth up to 10 per cent of its annual global revenue, or be forced to carry out "remedies" to satisfy the competition concerns.

The commission opened its investigation in July 2023 after rival Slack Technologies, which makes popular workplace messaging software, filed a complaint with Brussels. A second company, videoconferencing software maker Alfaview, filed a second complaint. Rival messaging platform Slack, owned by business software maker Salesforce, has alleged that Microsoft abused its market dominance to eliminate competition — in violation of EU laws — by illegally combining Teams with its Office suite, which includes Word, Excel and Outlook. —*PTI*

The European Commission said it informed Microsoft of its preliminary view of restricting competition PHOTO: PTI

Private firms to make mini satellite for Defence Ministry

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

The Ministry of Defence will collaborate with a private firm working in the space sector for design and development of a "miniaturised satellite" capable of carrying multiple payloads up to 150kg, officials said on Tuesday.

The collaboration will follow a contract inked with SpacePixxel Technologies.

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), the flagship initiative of the ministry, signed the landmark 350th contract here on Tuesday.

The contract was exchanged between Additional Secretary (Defence Production) and CEO, Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO), Anurag Bajpai, and founder and CEO of SpacePixxel Technologies Awais Ahmed Nadeem Alduri in the presence of Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and other senior civil and military officials of the ministry.

SpacePixxel has been actively working to build and launch high-resolution hyperspectral imaging satellites to provide detailed earth observation data, the statement said.

"This 350th iDEX contract enables innovation in space electronics, wherein many payloads earlier deployed on dedicated large satellites are now being miniaturised.

The modular small satellite will integrate multiple miniaturised payloads as per requirement, providing advantages like faster and economical deployment, ease of manufacturing, scalability, adaptability and less environmental impact," it said.

Innovation fuels indigenisation by driving the creation of new technologies and solutions that can be produced domestically, the defence secretary said, assuring all possible support to the innovators at every step.—*AP*

EURO 2024

Modric bemoans 'cruel' late draw with Italy

Croatia's Luka is the oldest goalscorer in Europe's history

DORTMUND, 25 JUNE

Italy play out 1-1 draw with Croatia in Euro 2024 ***PHOTO: X / @EURO2024***

Mattia Zaccagni's superb last-gasp strike fired Italy into the Euro 2024 knock-outs with a 1-1 draw against Croatia in a fraught Group B clash on Monday. Italy progressed to second place behind winners Spain. It will face Switzerland in the last 16, while Croatia is on the verge of elimination but could still progress depending on other results later in the week. With only two points it is unlikely Zlatko Dalic's side will qualify as one of the four best third-place teams but it is still possible. Croatia midfielder Luka Modric became the oldest goalscorer in the competition's history with his strike after 55 minutes, just 33 seconds after Gianluigi Donnarumma saved the 38-year-old's penalty.

Croatia finished third in Group B behind runners-up Italy and Spain.

They will be knocked out of the tournament on Tuesday if England does not beat Slovenia 3-0 or by four goals, or if Denmark fails to defeat Serbia.

The 2022 World Cup semi-finalists were the better side for long periods against Italy in Leipzig, missing chances to score a second goal late on.

"It's hard when you lose like this to find the words to describe how you feel," added Modric, whose goal came less than 60 seconds after he had a penalty saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma.

"Perhaps it's unfair because we all fought for Croatia right from the first whistle until the last. We should be proud of the way we represented our country tonight."

Modric is playing in his fifth Euros and has also appeared at four World Cups.

But he said he would not be retiring from football yet, as he continues to perform at the highest level after also winning his sixth Champions League title with Real Madrid earlier this month.

"I'd like to keep playing forever but there will probably be a time I'll have to hang up my boots," Modric said.

"I'll keep playing on, I don't know for how much longer."

His first European Championship ended with an agonizing quarter-final exit at the hands of Turkey in 2008, when Croatia took the lead in the 119th minute in extra time, before conceding an equalizer and then losing on penalties.

Modric admitted Monday's heartbreak ranked alongside that loss 16 years ago.

"It's hard to outdo the Turkey game from 2008 but this game probably runs it pretty close. It's certainly a sad day for us and the Croatian national team."

—AP

Afghanistan's Naveen-ul-Haq and Afghanistan's Fazalhaq Farooqi celebrate the dismissal of Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan (R) during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 match ***PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP***

Afghanistan beat B'desh, storm into maiden WCSF

KINGSTOWN, 25 JUNE

The redoubtable Rashid Khan led the way as Afghanistan qualified for their maiden T20 World Cup semifinal with an eight-run win over Bangladesh in a rain-hit Super 8 match here, adding a golden chapter to their cricketing history that has survived the war, political ostracization and lack of even a base at home.

In the process, Rashid's maverick team knocked out 2021 champions Australia after having humbled them in their previous Super 8 match. The Afghans will now face South Africa in the last-four stage on 27 June. "It's unbelievable, I don't have any words to describe my feelings. Back home, everyone is so happy for this big achievement," Rashid said in the post-match presentation.

Opting to bat after winning the toss, Afghanistan's batting stumbled to a below-par 115/5 as Bangladesh bowlers made the most of a tricky pitch, bowling as many as 66 dot balls. Leg-Spinner Rishad Hossain, 3/26, led the charge while for Afghanistan, opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz hit a painstaking 43 off 55 balls.

The match was eventually truncated to 19-overs-a-side due to frequent rain interruptions and Bangladesh was given a revised target of 114.

—PTI

Only guy who put us in the semifinals was Brian: Rashid

KINGSTOWN, 25 JUNE

Brian Lara and Rashid Khan ***PHOTO: X/@T20WORLDCUP***

West Indian batting great Brian Lara had predicted Afghanistan would reach the T20 World Cup semifinals nearly a month before the tournament began and now that the giant slayers have made it, skipper Rashid Khan said he is immensely proud to have proved the legend right. Afghanistan continued their brilliant run at the T20 World Cup as they marched to their first-ever World Cup semifinal with an eight-run win over Bangladesh in the last Super 8 clash here. *—AP*

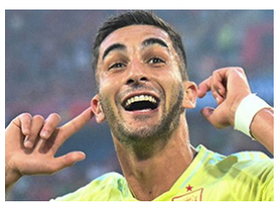


PHOTO: X / @EURO2024

Much-changed Spain beats Albania 1-0 at Euro 2024

DUESSELDORF, 25 JUNE

Spain changed almost its entire lineup and still kept up its victorious start to the European Championship with a 1-0 win over Albania, which was eliminated. With his team already assured of winning Group B, coach Luis de la Fuente changed 10 of his starters and Spain won all three group games at the Euros for the first time since 2008, when it went on to win the tournament. A 13th-minute goal from Ferran Torres and goalkeeper David Raya's stoppage-time save from Armando Broja ensured Spain completed the group stage without conceding a goal.*—AP*

Euro 2024: Must-win game for Czechs against Turkey

DORTMUND, 25 JUNE

Czechs vs Turkey ***PHOTO: X / @EURO2024***

Turkey needs a point from its final group match against the Czech Republic in Hamburg to be sure of reaching the knockout stage of the European Championship.

The Czechs need a win and a favor from group winner Portugal against Georgia in the other game at the same time. Turkey has three points in Group F, two more than the Czech Republic, after opening with a 3-1 win over Georgia before losing to Portugal 3-0. The Czechs lost to Portugal 2-1 before drawing with Georgia 1-1 in Hamburg. Turkey will be eliminated if it loses and Georgia beats Portugal in the other game. Georgia has a point from its draw with the Czechs. If the Czech Republic and Georgia both win, second and third place will be decided on goal difference, then goals scored, then disciplinary points, then qualifier rankings. The Czech Republic will finish third with two points if it draws with Turkey and Georgia doesn't win. A defeat means certain elimination.**Match starts at 9 p.m. local on Wednesday** *—AP*

Brazil held to a 0-0 draw by Costa Rica

INGLEWOOD, 25 JUNE

Brazil's Vinícius Júnior (L) and Costa Rica's Haxzel Quirós battle for the ball during the CONMEBOL Copa America 2024 Group D soccer match ***PHOTO: @COPAAMERICA***

Brazil was held to a 0-0 draw by Costa Rica, with the international powerhouse inauspiciously failing to break through in its Copa America opener.

Although Brazil controlled play and outshot Costa Rica 18-2, the Seleção was held scoreless by a defense led by goalkeeper Patrick Sequeira, who made three saves while recording the team's fourth consecutive clean sheet.

Brazil had an apparent goal by Marquinhos disallowed in the first half after a lengthy VAR check, but the team known for decades of sublime offensive play never got closer to a score — and never got a break on several questionable refereeing calls — in front of a lively crowd of 67,158 dominated by their yellow-clad fans at SoFi Stadium.

The result left Colombia on top of Group D after its 2-1 victory over Paraguay. Brazil has won the Copa America nine times, but its current transitional squad led by Real Madrid stars Vinícius Júnior and Rodrygo got off to a discouraging start.

Brazil coach Dorival Júnior said the result wasn't thoroughly poor, noting his team's wide advantages in possession and chances. *—AP*

India Women will open their campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan ***PHOTO: PTI***

India to play Pakistan in Women's T20

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Defending champions India Women will open their campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan on 19 July in the Women's T20 Asia Cup to be held in Dambulla, Sri Lanka.

The top eight teams of the continent will participate in the tournament from July 19 till 28 July.Unlike last time, this year the eight teams have been divided into two groups.

India Pakistan, UAE, and Nepal are placed in Group A, while Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Malaysia are in Group B.According to the updated schedule released by the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), after Pakistan, India will take on UAE on 21 July, followed by the match against Nepal on July 23.The top two teams from each group will qualify for the semifinals to be held on 26 July while the final is scheduled for 28 July.

Besides India, Pakistan, UAE, and Nepal, hosts Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, Thailand, and Malaysia are the other participating teams. The tournament will once again feature an all-female team of match officials. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

David Warner retires from int'l cricket

DORTMUND, 25 JUNE

One of the greatest batters of all time, David Warner's international career ended on a bitter note after Australia failed to qualify for the T20 World Cup 2024 semi-finals, exiting in the Super 8 stage. For Australia to continue their journey in the tournament, they needed Bangladesh to beat Afghanistan in the final Super 8 match on Monday. Though the Bangla Tigers came close, Rashid Khan, Naveen-ul-Haq, and others stepped up at crucial intervals to knock the Aussies out of the tournament with a win. Australia's premature elimination from the tournament also confirmed Warner's international exit. The opening batter had already confirmed that the T20 World Cup in the USA and West Indies would be his last in the Australian shirt. Despite hinting at a potential return for next year's Champions Trophy, it appears unlikely, Warner ended his international career in stages, playing his last ODI during Australia's triumphant 2023 campaign in India, his final Test against Pakistan in early

Eastbourne int'l: Norrie's poor form continues

DUBAI, 25 JUNE

Cameron Norrie and Emma Raducanu ***PHOTO: @EASTBOURNEINT***

Cameron Norrie's poor form continued as he crashed out of the Rothesay International in Eastbourne following a disappointing first-round defeat to world number 88 Emil Ruusuvuori.

The former British number one has slipped outside the top 40 after losing nine of his previous 15 matches, including first-round exits at the French Open and Queen's.

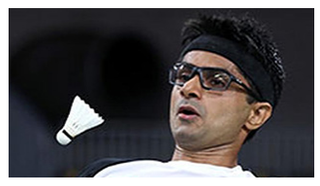
Norrie, who was also beaten by world number 773 Jack Pinnington Jones at Nottingham, saw his miserable run extended by a 7-6 (9) 6-3 exit at the hands of 25-year-old Finn Ruusuvuori.

Raducanu sees off Sloane with an epic performance in Eastbourne

Emma Raducanu has put her painful defeat to British No.1 Katie Boulter behind her with a 6-4 6-0 victory over American star Sloane Stephens. Raducanu lost to her fellow Brit in the Nottingham Open semi-finals 10 days ago but won her opening match in Eastbourne against world No.45 Stephens on Tuesday, in what is her last tournament before the Wimbledon Championships.It was Stephens who took the lead in an incredibly frantic first set at the Devonshire Park Lawn Tennis Club – which saw both players produce double breaks – and it seemed we were heading for a tie-break before an epic Game 10. *—AP*

Suhas is now World No. 1 para shuttler

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE



Suhas Yathiraj ***PHOTO: PTI***

Indian para shuttler Suhas Yathiraj on Tuesday became the world's number one player, displacing French legend Lucas Mazur in the latest BWF Para-Badminton World Rankings. The 40-year-old Arjuna awardee had won the silver medal in the SL-4 category at the Tokyo Paralympics, losing the title clash to Mazur.

Suhas has now amassed 60,527 points, leaving behind his French rival (58953).

Finally World Number 1. Happy to share that, In the latest Badminton World Federation Para Badminton rankings announced today for the Men's Singles category. *—PTI*

PARIS OLYMPICS

Equestrian Agarwalla to represent India

PARIS, 25 JUNE

The Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) has selected Anush Agarwalla to represent the country ***PHOTO: @ANUSHAGARWALLA***

- Asian Games medallist Anush Agarwalla will represent the country in the dressage event of the Paris Olympics after pipping close contender Shruti Vora on better average, the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) said on Tuesday.

Asian Games medallist Anush Agarwalla will represent the country in the dressage event of the Paris Olympics after pipping close contender Shruti Vora on better average, the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) said on Tuesday.

Agarwalla, who bagged gold in team dressage and bronze in individual dressage events at the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games, was picked ahead of Vora after a careful evaluation of the recent performances of the two contenders.

It will be India's first-ever entry at the dressage event of the Olympics as largely riders in past editions competed in eventing categories only.

Agarwalla (with his horse Sir Caramello Old) has been consistent since the qualification period began last year and achieved the Minimum Eligibility Requirement four times, while veteran Vora earned the required two MERs this month.

When an average was taken out of the contenders in the assessment, Agarwalla emerged winner. He had an average score of 67.695 percent which was better than Vora's 67.163 percent.

"As per the criteria set by EFI, a rider-horse combination is required to achieve a minimum of 67 percent twice between January 1, 2023, and June 24, 2024, to be eligible for the Paris Games qualification," the federation said in a release.

"According to EFI selection criteria, if more than one athlete is eligible then the athlete with the highest average in Grand Prix out of the best four events in the past one year shall be chosen to participate."

Vora (with horse Magnanimous) had earned her second MER of the year with her second-place finish at the Brno Grand Prix in the Czech Republic, where she scored 68.174 in the dressage event, thereby becoming eligible for Olympic qualification.

Vora earned her first MER early this month when she became the first Indian rider to win a three-star Grand Prix event Dressage World Cup, held in Lipica, Slovenia with 67.761. Her other two GP performances had scores of 66.543 percent and 66.174 percent which were below MER level. *—PTI*

Sai returns to Surrey for County Championship

LONDON, 25 JUNE

Sai Sudharsan ***PHOTO: @SAIS_1509***

Indian batter Sai Sudharsan will return to England to play some matches for Surrey in the ongoing County Championship, the club announced on Tuesday.

The 22-year-old had joined Surrey last season and played two County Championship matches, scoring 116 runs, including a half-century, to help the side win its 22nd title.

The Chennai cricketer had a great IPL 2024 season, finishing as the highest run-scorer for Gujarat Titans, accumulating 527 runs in 12 outings, including a century and two 50s.

Sudharsan made his ODI debut against South Africa last year, scoring 127 runs in three matches, including two half-centuries.

He has accumulated 1,118 runs in 29 innings in First-Class cricket.

"I'm so excited to represent Surrey again. I loved my time with the group last year and want to do my best to help the club achieve more success," Sudharsan said in a statement.

"The Kia Oval is an incredible place to play cricket, and I can't wait to get back out there wearing the Three Feathers."

Surrey's Director of Men's Cricket, Alec Stewart, added, "We saw how good a player Sai is last year, and we're pleased to welcome him back into the group, where he fitted in perfectly." *—AP*